Vernacular Photographs as Privileged Objects: The Social Relationships of Photographs in the Homes of Gujarati/New Zealanders

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Foreword and Acknowledgements

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Abstract

Keywords: *Vernacular Photographs, Photo-elicitation, Indian migrants, Gujarati migrants, New Zealand Indian Migrant Communities, Transnationalism, Visual Anthropology, Social Agency.*

Photographs traverse the world in many forms and for many purposes. They follow and trace movements and networks of people, and have become essential objects in linking the past, present, and future of migrating communities. Vernacular photographs found in the home, encompass a substantial field of neglected knowledge and should be accorded greater attention and analysis in social science research. Vernacular images in academic research are often described as ordinary and mundane, their representational aspects are perceived to be repetitive and unremarkable (portraits, family snapshots etc.). However, this thesis argues that vernacular photographs are privileged objects and it is their universality and social embeddedness that elevates their significance in social science research. Unlike public or institutionalised photographic archives, vernacular archives operate within active social contexts and are alive with social agency. In this thesis, I use Alfred Gell's anthropological theory of Art and Agency as the framework for conceptualising the social agency of photographs. To support these claims, this research examines the personal photographs found in the vernacular archives of a Gujarati migrant group in Christchurch, New Zealand. The photographs presented by members of this group are found at the centre of their social lives, mirroring their experiences and relationships in visual form. I use the Chakra Wheel as a visual metaphor to symbolise the nature of this group and their photographs. This metaphor speaks directly to the phenomenon of transnationalism and acknowledges that, for migrant communities, these transitioning processes are complex and elaborate, where the foundations of kinship and homemaking are constantly shifting. Vernacular photographs are at the centre of these transnational exchanges and networks, shifting from place to place, creating tangible and virtual threads between individuals, families, villages, and communities. They anchor these relationships at various sites, such as the wall in the family home, in albums, wallets, and on the internet. Vernacular photographs mirror these complex processes, and silently record and embody the social lives of people in a visual way.

The mirrored reflection of the vernacular photograph can be both objective and subjective. By using the vernacular photograph as a research medium, in ethnographic research, we can get closer to the lived reality of people's social lives. To emphasise the privileged position of vernacular photographs, I have chosen to use the methodology of photo-elicitation to position the photograph at the centre of enquiry. The methodology used in this thesis borrows some essential concepts from the discipline of phototherapy. Phototherapy claims that photographs can open up an exploration of us and others and, when the participant has primary agency, the affective force of the photograph is powerful and insightful. This thesis strongly supports these assumptions. Phototherapy uses photographs to explore the thoughts and unconscious processes of individuals. I argue that, in social research,

photographs can also be used to explore and 'open up' the social world, by positioning the participant as the prime authority of their images, and their images as the vehicle of engagement and communication. By using vernacular photographs in this way, I look at both 'on the surface' and 'below the surface' of the image, making links with Barthes' photographic theory and his concepts of 'studium' and 'punctum'. In this thesis, the participants are the curators of their own personal archives. Their photographs give an emic view of their world, emphasising the importance of their migrant history, ancestors, village home, community, and cultural identity. Their photographs mediate agency between persons and places: keeping alive personal and spiritual relationships in the here and now; reinforcing essential familial knowledge systems; and assisting in creating and maintaining community identity and belonging.

Preface:

A Privileged Object

This photograph is a treasured object found in the album of Raesha. It has travelled from its point of creation, the family home in the village Adada, Navsari, a south-western coastal region of Gujarat, India, to a family album in Christchurch, New Zealand. It is not displayed on the walls of Raesha's home, in deference to Muslim custom in which images of people should not be regarded as icons. However, Raesha felt it was appropriate to show this photograph to me, in this research context. Raesha is 31 years of age and is a fourth generation, New Zealand-born, Gujarati/New Zealander. This photograph, is one of three photographs she has of her grandfather, Kara Ismail. It elicits not only memories and narratives, but also emotions and sensations. It performs its own social interactions with those that treasure it.

On ‘the surface’ of the image, we see Kara Ismail as on older man lying in his bed. It is a casual photograph taken within his home. He is aware of the photographer and looks directly into the camera. His expression is serious, but his composure and body language appears relaxed. This photograph links with Kara Ismail’s life story and the social and cultural signifance it represents for the family and the Christchruch/Gujarati community. The photograph contains the story of Kara Ismail who was the son of Mohammed Ismail, the first Gujarati Muslim to arrive in New Zealand in 1907. Mohammed migrated to New Zealand as a free labourer, with the intention of bettering his family circumstances back in his village in India. He chose to settle in Christchurch where he operated a small shop. Kara Ismail followed his father to New Zealand in 1921 at the age of 13 (Leckie 2007:23). The Ismail family were the first Gujarati Muslim settlers in Christchurch. In later years, they were central to the growing Muslim community in Christchurch. As original settlers the Ismail men, though Muslim, resided with other Gujarati (Hindu) migrants. Later, when their wives began to arrive, they moved into separate residences. Their families, however, continued to rely upon each other for support.

Kara Ismail continued his father’s desire to provide for his family back in the village of Adada and was known as an astute business man. A story written in Edwina Pio’s recent book *Sari* (2008), as presented by another Gujarati New Zealander, describes him as:

> A hard worker, a capable and clever man. He bought gold sovereigns from the men who came over from the West Coast. He was a canny, smooth talker and somehow convinced people to work for him in acquiring gold sovereigns. When he went back to India he had a collection of gold sovereigns which he put in the soles of his shoes… he bought up a lot of land around his village and became a wealthy landowner (2008:29).

‘Below the surface’ of this photograph is the personal interaction Raesha experiences when viewing or thinking about this image. When Raesha looks at this image, she experiences a connection with her grandfather through memories and affective responses. She feels emotions, hears sounds and visualises images. This one photograph opens up the social world of Raesha, her grandfather and her family history.

Reasha presented this photograph to me as one of her significant personal photographs. When looking at this photograph Raesha not only remembers her grandfather's narrative as above, some of which she has read or been told, but she also experiences strong emotions and sensory responses. Through this photograph, Raesha remembers her childhood visit back to her village in Adada, Navsari. She visualises herself looking through the living room window watching her grandfather walk across the village street to sit in a chair outside the factory, sitting comfortably with his legs crossed while he talks and interacts with others in the village. Raesha hears him in the early morning pulling up the bed and going to the old cupboard in the front room and unlocking it. She can hear him taking out a little container of money from the cupboard and sees him taking out this 'black stuff' that he kept in a little tin, which he would sell for medicinal purposes. Raesha can also see the house and the front lounge where he would often sit or lie in his bed interacting with the family. She feels the swinging motion of the large wooden swing in the front lounge that they would sit on while they talked. She visualises his distinct cute walk and can see him walking through the house. She recalls his mannerisms and characteristics. When looking at this photo, Raesha feels strong emotions that are a mix of sadness, awe and frustration. Sadness, that he passed away before her marriage in the village family home, and the loss of his distinct presence in her life. Awe, at the remarkable person he was and the strong significance he had for both the family and community. As Raesha explains, *" He was such a strong significant person in that house and that community. When I look at this it reminds me of how dominant a figure he was in that community."* Raesha also feels the frustration she experienced communicating with him as he got older, when his voice became muffled and hard to understand. She feels a strong sense of attachment and identification through this photograph, an attachment to him both as a person and also as a link to her Indian/ Gujarati history and identity: *"I was very interested in him, because he was my link to New Zealand and India"*.

Photographs, such as this, exist in the confines of Indian homes, in places other than their point of origin. This one photo tells many stories and evokes many responses. It forms a virtual thread temporally, and geographically between locations. It continues to link the past, the present, and the future, as well as linking the social lives of Gujarati families in Christchurch to the 'motherland' of India.

It is rare to find photos of the original Indian settlers around the time of their arrival. They did not have access to cameras and photography, in the villages, at the turn of the century, and nor could they afford this, relatively, new medium that was not yet available in the vernacular. The rarity of photographs of this generation and the significance of Kara Ismail in the lives of his family make this photograph a privileged and essential object. This photograph articulates Raesha's powerful embodied feelings and responses. Without this image, these may never have come 'to the surface'.

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Introduction

"If we are to gain new knowledge from using images, it will come in other forms and by different means" (MacDougall 2006a:2)

" ... images ... provided the map of their experiences, while their voices provided the detail of their journey" (Liebenberg 2009:460).

Vernacular photographs are embedded within our social lives and our social lives are embedded within them. They perform and maintain significant social relations and for this reason should be promoted as important, and useful sites for anthropological research. When social researchers are gathering information about the lives of others, the family photograph is often defined as ordinary and mundane and relegated to the realm of the domestic, with little consideration for their social worth. They are often skated over briefly and acknowledged as documents of events, places and persons. This thesis argues that by discerning vernacular photographs as privileged objects we can 'open up' social worlds.

The lack of significance given to vernacular photographs can be explained by the historical biases and controversies that has surrounded the discipline of photography, in the past. As David Prochaska (1991) comments, photography has always been a second cousin to the canon of art. Vernacular photographs have been percieved as products of mass production and popular culture, and therefore considered, by mainstream art historians, to be, "degraded versions of 'high' art photography" (Prochaska 1991:40). Oxford Reference Online, defines

vernacular photography as: "Aesthetically unpretentious, generally functional images made by amateur snap shooters or grass-roots professionals for everyday purposes such as creating keepsakes or recording mundane objects"(Lenman 2005). Alongside these assumptions, vernacular photography has suffered from photography's controversial profile as a tool used by colonisers to control and objectify 'others'. For this reason photography's past role in social science has been heavily critiqued, causing a hiatus in both the use and research of photography in anthropological research, demoting the vernacular photograph into the realm of 'the taken for granted'. In contrast, when we move out of the academic realm and into the domestic and personal, vernacular photographs have maintained a revered status and are regarded as privileged objects in our day to day lives.

In this thesis, I seek to rewrite and reinstate the status of vernacular photographs in anthropological research, following growing research trends attempting to understand the substantive role vernacular photographs play within our social worlds. I espouse that vernacular photographs allow for an alternate reading of social relationships as expressed through both language and affect.

The decision to use the photograph as both the focus and mediator of this project grew out of the following literature that supports the inherent corporeality, social agency, and materiality of the photograph. These three theoretical concepts, when considered together, enable an in-depth and detailed exploration of the social world through photographs.

Corporeality

We know vernacular photographs to be objective records of events, persons and places. The value of this form of information gleaned from the 'surface of the image' is well known, and valued in academic research. However, when we look 'below the surface' of the image we find additional forms of knowledge.

MacDougall (2006a) points out, that visual images, in the past, have been dominated by visual discourse that reduces all knowledge to 'information'. He suggests that anthropology should give greater weight to embodied experience and the role of the sensory in cultural life. In this thesis, the vernacular photograph provides a way to explore these alternative experiences. MacDougall refers to these alternate experiences as corporeal.

MacDougall (2006a:6) challenges anthropology's reliance on the value of knowledge as 'meaning' (of rational thought) and words, claiming that it is missing the opportunity to embrace the knowledge of 'being', where, he claims, " images reflect thought, and they may lead to thought, but they are much more than thought". The corporeality of images includes not only that which is visible, but also other senses including, touch, motion and sound. By exploring other dimensions, " a much fuller range of social life becomes accessible to representation and analysis" (MacDougall 2006a:269). For example, the photograph of Kara Ismail provides not only a record of how he looks, what he wears, and where he lives, but also accesses sounds and movements. This 'opens up' a description of him and his social world that is thick with affect, and is directly linked with his grandaughter's experiences and perceptions.

Roland Barthes in his classic book *Camera Lucida (1980)* explores the affective experience of viewing photographs through his own personal responses. From his exploration, he defines two potential responses. Firstly, he found that some photographs evoked what he terms *studium,* where the photograph creates a general interest in the intentions of the creator, and the cultural relevance to the viewer. According to Barthes', this response is non-affective. In contrast, he found that some photographs evoked *punctum*: where they prick your attention, arrest your gaze, and are highly affective. Barthes' refers to the word 'wound' as a way to express how he feels when he looks at certain photographs with '*punctum'*. I have used Barthes' theory and terminology, *studium* and *punctum,* in this thesis, to differentiate between the 'surface of the image', and 'below the surface' of the image, respectively. This approach suggests that vernacular photographs, as in Barthes' personal experience, provide varied responses determined by the viewer's subjective experience of the photographic image. Sometimes a personal photograph provides relevant information about the context of its creation and cultural, social, economic, and historical data. At other times, the photograph accesses affective relationships and experiences that interact with the viewer.

This thesis reflects upon Barthes' theory and finds the terms *punctum* and *studium* useful in describing the different responses experienced when looking at vernacular images. However, it questions and extends Barthes' theory, especially when applied to non-Western photography - where images embody persons. For Barthes', photographs epitomized the phrase 'that has been'. He draws a parallel between the photograph and death, where the photograph is always about something that has passed and ceased to exist in the present, therefore reminding us of our own mortality. This perspective of 'that has been', and death is

an important argument in this thesis, where, for Gujarati Hindu families and individuals, photographs continue to keep relationships present in the here and now, and the photograph assures the continued presence of the person in the future.

The informative nature of photography has dominated photographic discourse in the past; it is the affective nature of photographs as presented by Barthes and MacDougall that requires greater attention. This suggests that there is an area of engagement with photographs that is predominantly non–linguistic. In essence, photographs have the ability to relate in a non-verbal way. Biddle (2007; 2006), for example, suggests that at times we not so much visualize, but 'feel' images. She refers specifically to the affective responses experienced when viewing Aboriginal art, particularly as a 'performance' or 'enunciation' rather than a description. Biddle (2006:16), emphasizes that the affective experience of an image is not language dependent and is profoundly a '*wordless occasion'*. Although Biddle's research refers to Indigenous Australian paintings, photographs in this research are also found to be profoundly affective, where the viewer of the photograph relinquishes their sense of separateness from the image, and where a certain 'coming-into-being' with the photograph occurs. There are strong parallels between Barthes' *punctum* and Biddle's *wordless occasion*. They both refer to something beyond words that is experienced and felt rather than understood and described.

Lisle (2006), adds another dimension to these theoretical premises. She attempts to explain the responses from viewing images as an animation. Her theory focuses upon the pre-interpretive moment when images reach out and grab us. However, she adds that this

experience is always moving and full of flux. For Lisle, photographs are constantly mobile, from the taking of the image, to the physical, visual and metaphorical interactions experienced when viewing images.

These theoretical perspectives are relevant to the use of personal photographs in social research. They attest to the ability of the visual image to affect viewers in a corporeal, emotional, and sensual way. According to these perspectives photographs are socially interactive and therefore, I argue, they must have a high degree of social agency.

Social Agency

I rely on Alfred Gell's (1998) anthropological theory of *Art and Agency* to explain how vernacular photographs have social agency. Gell's theory assumes that all social groups create art objects, which communicate their values and identity. These objects are used in social practices, and are displayed, viewed, and exchanged. Fundamentally, Gell's theory holds that art objects are alive and equivalent to persons, and are therefore defined as *social agents*. In other words, *objects* (secondary agents) are intentionally made by the *primary agent* (person) to share with the surrounding environment and therefore affect their *agency*. The viewer of the visual object is defined as the *recipient,* who takes meaning and inference from the object. Applying Gell's theory to photographic research implies that photographs have social relations and agency; they interact with, and affect their surrounding environment. Gell also proposes that an object's agency is distributed across networks of people and artifacts, scattered through space and time. Therefore, an objects agency may

persist even after the biological death of the person (Gell 1998:102). Photographs are also distributed objects and can, themselves, initiate and act in social relations.

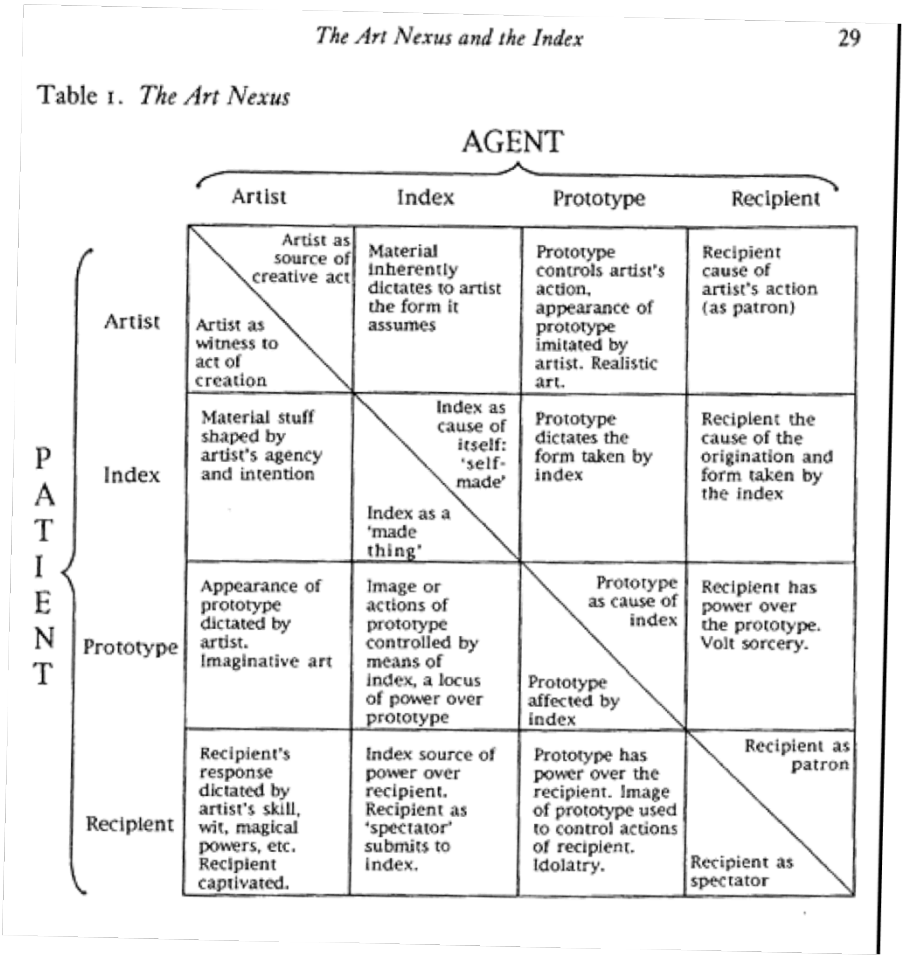
Photographs perform as privileged objects in the vernacular. They do more than function as a static object on the mantelpiece; they perform certain social interactions which impact on their surrounding environment. Benjamin Smith (2003:4-5) suggests that this viewpoint is perhaps unusual from a European perspective. However, it may be a more commonplace notion for non-Europeans. Smith (2003) supports Gell's theory and describes photographs as, simultaneously, records of family history and social things, that are produced and distributed in specific contexts. He found in his research with Coen Aboriginals, that their responses to photographs of deceased persons were directly tied to their perspectives on death, where the deceased person continues to manifest agency through the body, their belongings, their house, their names and their photographic image. In other words, the photograph's agency is spiritual. This example maps on to Gell's model of objects and agency:

> A person and a person's mind are not confined to particular spatio – temporal coordinates, but consist of a spread of biographical events and memories of events, and a dispersed category of material objects, traces, and leavings, which can be attributed to a person and which, in aggregate, testify to agency… during a biographical career which may, indeed, prolong itself long after biological death (1998:222) .

To extend Gell's perspective, I argue that in migrant contexts, where lives are scattered, objects such as photographs help to gather together and mirror the traces and leavings of a person's biographical career. Their social agency becomes more enhanced and privileged within this context. Although, Gell does not specifically refer to photographs in his writings, it is a logical step to claim that photographs have social agency. Gell's 'Art Nexus'

summarizes the multiple relationships available between *agent* and *patient*. The following table helps to explain where photographs fit within this model.

Gell's Art Nexus



The Art Nexus and the Index 29

Table 1. *The Art Nexus*

PATIENT \ AGENT	Artist	Index	Prototype	Recipient
Artist	Artist as witness to act of creation / Artist as source of creative act	Material inherently dictates to artist the form it assumes	Prototype controls artist's action, appearance of prototype imitated by artist. Realistic art.	Recipient cause of artist's action (as patron)
Index	Material stuff shaped by artist's agency and intention	Index as a 'made thing' / Index as cause of itself: 'self-made'	Prototype dictates the form taken by index	Recipient the cause of the origination and form taken by the index
Prototype	Appearance of prototype dictated by artist. Imaginative art	Image or actions of prototype controlled by means of index, a locus of power over prototype	Prototype affected by index / Prototype as cause of index	Recipient has power over the prototype. Volt sorcery.
Recipient	Recipient's response dictated by artist's skill, wit, magical powers, etc. Recipient captivated.	Index source of power over recipient. Recipient as 'spectator' submits to index.	Prototype has power over the recipient. Image of prototype used to control actions of recipient. Idolatry.	Recipient as spectator / Recipient as patron

To relate this model specifically to vernacular photographic research, the *Index* is the photograph, or album, or collage (groups of images). The *Artist* is the photographer or subsequent custodian or presenter of the photograph. The *Recipient* is the viewer/s of the photograph, and the *Prototype* is the person, place, or thing seen within the photograph.

The following research can be mapped onto this model, where the *index* is the photograph presented by the participant; the *artist* is the participant, who chooses the photograph to present to the researcher; the *recipient/s* is/are both the researcher and the participant who is both viewing the photograph; and the *prototype* is the content (subject) within the photograph. When placing vernacular photographs into this framework, they become complex objects and can be relating simultaneously at various points. For example, a participant presenting a photograph can be simultaneously the *artist* (creator of the photograph, or presenter of the photograph), the *recipient* (viewing and responding to the photograph) and *prototype* (by being in the content, the subject of the photograph). By placing vernacular photographs into this framework we can see the applicability of Gell's model in visual anthropological research, as well as the complex and multidimensional relationships that photographs perform.

Janet Hoskin's follows a similar train of thought in her book *Biographical Objects: How Things Tell The Stories of People's Lives* (1998). She writes: " An object…becomes a pivot of reflexivity and introspection, a tool of autobiographic self-discovery, a way of knowing oneself through things" (1998:198). Hoskin's defines biographical objects as those objects that share our lives with us. They are objects that have become significant because of biographical experiences and associated narratives. Hoskin's field work with the Kodi of Eastern Indonesia focused upon intimate exchanges between individual actors and their domestic objects. Her interest was upon those objects that had been given extraordinary significance by becoming intertwined in the events of a person's life and "used as a vehicle for selfhood"(1998:2). Hoskin found that by focusing on significant objects/possessions of

the Kodi person, the Kodi became great story tellers when previously they were bashful and tongue-tied. She argues that a focus on an object provides a distanced form of introspection.

This research borrows from Hoskins's concept of 'biographical objects' and assumes personal photographs to have extraordinary significance as vehicles of selfhood. The claim, that objects can provide a distanced form of introspection is strongly supported throughout this thesis. The methodology of auto photo-elicitation used in this thesis, relies heavily on this perspective.

As I claimed previously, due to the embeddedness of photographs in our social lives, vernacular photographs fit into a category of privileged objects, and are, consequently, a valuable resource, and tool for anthropological research. I do not deny other categories of objects as significant, but I do claim that photographs perform complex and inalienable interactions in the social lives of people, making them an essential and privileged object to both the person and their surrounding environment.

Materiality

Central to understanding the significance of vernacular photographs in the social lives of people, is Edwards concept of 'materiality' (2002). This theory has strongly influenced how researchers conceptualize the photographic image. Edwards argues, that the dominance of research on image content needs to be re-evaluated so that the physical attributes of the photograph are also included in the analysis of photographic images. She claims, that photography is not merely the instrument of indexical description, it is also a technology for

visual display experienced as meaningful (2002:67). The ‘materiality’ of the image includes the plasticity of the image (the paper, toning, and surface effects as well as the technical and physical choices), and the presentational forms (albums, frames, mounts etc.). Both these forms of materiality display the physical traces of usage and time. Materiality is similar to the concept of social biography where an object is involved within a continuing process of meaning, production, exchange, and consumption. As Edwards comments, “objects are enmeshed in and active in, social relations, not merely passive entities in these processes” (2002 :68). She describes photographs as ‘raw histories’; unprocessed and painful and accessing responses directly (2001). This description, suggests an overlapping of the corporeal, the material, and the social agency of photographs.

Recent research presented by Gaynor MacDonald (2003) and Jennifer Deger (2008) pays close attention to the importance of the materiality of the image. This is especially pertinent when considering photographs in migrant communities where archiving, exchange, and the circulation of photographs are intertwined.

MacDonald’s (2003) article, ‘Photos in Wiradjuri Biscuit Tins: Negotiating Relatedness and Validating Colonial Histories’, resembles similar themes of materiality found in this thesis. Her research focused, in a similar way, on ‘family snapshots’ found in photo boxes collected and handed down over a century, by Wiradjuri people (an indigenous Australian group from central New South Wales). Her research gives recognition to the importance of personal photographs cherished by the indigenous people themselves, rather than photographs taken by an anthropologist or photographer. MacDonald (2003:226) argues that, “Indigenous

contexts differ from those of the usually (non–indigenous) photographer and anthropologist. The photo…unfolds as embodied meaning as it reveals itself in a particular cultural context". The photos presented by the Wiradjuri people, in this instance, were not only records of kin and ancestors, but also had a powerful influence on both kin relatedness and colonial history. These photographs demonstrated high cultural capital by being collected, swapped, and stolen. They played a distinct role in confirming the past, when colonial records denied their narrative histories. MacDonald (2003:230) notes that, material objects in the Wiradjuri community are shared. However, these possessed objects (photographs) are fiercely guarded and sometimes hidden, and, if highly valued, may travel with a person continually. Vernacular photographs in this instance, have become important cultural resources and extraordinary objects.

Jennifer Deger's article, 'Imprinting the Heart: Photography and Contemporary Yolngu Mournings'(2008), also substantiates the above theoretical positions. Her research exemplifies how photographs have significant social agency within the Yolngu (indigenous Australian people inhabiting north-eastern Arnhem Land) community, where photography has developed its own conventions within this context, and where photographs perform as affective agents in their own right. Their physical presence and materiality is central to their embedded value. Deger describes the conventions and nature of Yolngu photographic images, and particularly images of deceased persons. She comments on the affective charges of these photographs and how they "effectively imprint traces of the deceased into the affective core of the bereaved, thereby ensuring an enduring and embodied connection between the living and the dead" (Deger 2008:300).

This thesis deals with similar kinds of viewer relationships, including the productivities of viewing, rather than the camera and the images they make. The observation of affective responses and experiences of the Yolngu people to their personal images, is riveting and mirrors similar results observed in this project. For example, Deger found that photographs had moved into the realm of the sacred, when in the past, photographs of recently deceased persons were taboo. They became *dhuyu,* dangerous to look at and charged with the presence of the deceased. However, she noticed a shift from deceased photographs as taboo, to a form of connection and cultural continuity, where " feelings, memories, and imaginative possibilities enabled them to (re) generate the possibilities and patterns of deeply felt, corporeally constituted connections across the spaces of an ancestral always-ness"(2008:305).

As highlighted in the above case studies, the fluid nature of photographs and their ability to adapt to different social contexts is also an essential assumption of this thesis. This assumption is highly relevant to migrant photographic archives, especially, given the fluid and shifting contexts of migration.

In summary, vernacular photographs are created objects alive with social agency. We invest in them values that shift over time in response to changing social contexts. As visual objects, they store information, evoke memories, and reflect representations of the past. As tangible objects, they can be held, displayed, circulated, and exchanged. As affective objects, they evoke sensations and emotions. They assist us in maintaining important social relationships by standing in for absences, as well as, in some contexts, making people and relationships alive in the here and now. The data gathered through the presentation of personal

photographs will support these above assumptions and exemplify the significance of vernacular photographs as effective mediators of social worlds.

A Cross-Disciplinary Methodology

To achieve the above, the methodology used needs to place both vernacular photographs, and participants, at the centre of the research project. I use the self presentation of vernacular photographs by Gujarati/New Zealanders to support the above theoretical assumptions. This methodological approach comes under the banner of photo-elicitation, and is a useful and illuminating method for visual anthropological research (Beilin 2005; Collier 1967; Collier 2002; Gold 2004; Harper 2002; Pink et al. 2004). The methodological framework used in this thesis delves within anthropology to previous research that has used photographs as a method in obtaining knowledge. It also extends outside anthropology to the discipline of phototherapy, where photographs are also used as a way of obtaining knowledge, but where the primary focus is on the affective responses found 'under the surface' of the image. It is necessary to use a multidisciplinary approach to encompass the varied dimensions of this research.

The discipline of phototherapy professes the ability of photographs to access alternative realities. Phototherapy has always promoted the value of photographs as an effective medium for personal expression and communication (Berman 1993; Weiser 1988; 1990; 2001). It espouses the potential of photographs to access hidden or unknown information, and advocates their powerful, affective force. This thesis borrows from the discipline of phototherapy, by using photographs as mediators of life experience, where the individual

creates and presents their own photographic images, using them as a form of self-expression and self-exploration. The justification for adopting this approach lies in phototherapy's understanding of photographs as powerful alternate forms of knowledge. It is at this juncture that the previous theoretical concepts, the corporeal, social agency, materiality, and phototherapy meet. Phototherapy supports the intrinsic usefulness and universality of photographs in our social lives and also professes that photographs can function as reflectors of a person's internal and external world (Berman 1993:vii).

Phototherapy offers some insights into the affective nature of visual images. It exists within the psychological framework of psychotherapy and specialises in the use of visual images to access individual experiences and perceptions, both conscious and unconscious. This approach recognises that photographs can act as useful devices for accessing individual feelings, attitudes, and beliefs, at a level that verbal questioning or observation may not. It also values the ability of visual images to evoke responses, memories, and affect. It stresses the emotionally charged nature of photographs and argues that feelings embedded in them are intensely complex (Weiser 2001:12). Phototherapy uses photographs to explore how their recipients experience, understand, and evaluate the world around them.

Vernacular photographs are not only mediators of the social world, they are also privileged objects that are involved in the day-to-day lives of people. In addition to the benefits of using photographs as a way of accessing participants experience of their social world, I also claim that vernacular photographs, when viewed in their day-to-day contexts, provide a form of therapeutic agency. I make links with Cosden and Reynolds (1982) who claim that various

activities in our day-to-day lives are therapeutic. They make the distinction between ‘therapy’ and ‘therapeutic activities’ and propose that activities that counter the stress of everyday life and contribute to peace of mind are, inherently, therapeutic in nature. In this thesis, the highly affective nature of the participants’ photographs and their responses to them, has led me to propose that the viewing of vernacular photographs is, in itself, a therapeutic activity. This suggests that some photographs perform therapeutic agency, and impact upon their viewer’s general sense of well-being. This will be demonstrated through the participants’ presentation of their most significant photographs.

Both phototherapy and anthropology are concerned with other people’s ways of knowing. However, phototherapy diverges from anthropology at the point of intention, where phototherapy aims to create change for the individual by bringing into consciousness, unconscious or hidden experiences and responses (Hogan & Pink 2010). Although this approach is problem-orientated, its concern with the visual image as a mediator of experience and understanding offers visual anthropology some valuable insights that can be incorporated into current research practices. As Irving (2007:190) explains: “Visual collaborations… are embodied activities that involve narration, whole-body movement, touch and the negotiation of various social contexts. As such they are more properly regarded as types of performative ethnography rather than simply ‘visual’ techniques”.

The methodology used in this thesis attempts to knit anthropology, photo-elicitation. and phototherapy together, creating a working model that places the participant and the image, in this instance, the photograph, as mediators of their social world. This thesis expands current

knowledge on the benefits of photo-elicitation techniques by suggesting that, not only do image-based techniques access individual responses, they also provide for a direct and seemingly easier access to social worlds. The highly affective nature of image-based research, particularly when participants present their own images, supports the use of this multidisciplinary approach. This approach aims to show that photographs can provide alternate responses that are more relevant to peoples social lives and more closely informed by affect, than verbal questioning and observation-based research.

Throughout this thesis, I argue that vernacular photographs play a crucial and underestimated role in our social lives. This is made most apparent in migrating communities, where photographs are experienced as privileged objects throughout the dynamic processes of migration, dislocation, transition, and settlement. To understand how the photograph performs as a privileged object in migrating communities, this thesis explores and examines the significance of the vernacular photograph in the homes of a group of Gujarati/New Zealanders. By curating their own photographic presentation, the participants from this group highlight their most significant relationships and life stories. As participants, who identify as members of a defined cultural group, Gujarati/NewZealanders, their photographs present both individual and common themes. Some photographs are significant because they maintain a sense of community and place, while others maintain and embody personal or spiritual relationships. The material presented in this research attests to the ability of photographs to adapt to specific cultural contexts and assist transnational communities in the adaptation and maintenance of social, cultural, spiritual, and personal relationships.

Photographic Context

The following section reviews academic literature specific to Indian photography, and aims to ascertain the differences between Indian and Western photographic practice. To begin this review, it is important to note that due to British rule in India at the time of photography's introduction, Western photographic practice was the original platform for the development of photographic practice in India. Over time, photographic practices adapted and adjusted to create an "Indian" style. Pinney (1997; 1999), MacDougall (2006b; MacDougall & MacDougall 1996), Gutman (1992), Sharma (1990), and Chandra (2000), agree that the underlying nature of Indian photography is different to Western photography. Western photography is obsessed with truth and the documentation of reality, whereas Indian photography transforms reality into the imaginative realm. Gutman (1992: 348) explains this difference as Western photography's obsession with the material world, in contrast with Indian photography's conception of an idealised space outside the physical realm. Gutman (1992:345), refers to Indian photography as adapting, rather than adopting photographic conventions. She suggests that Indian photographers "followed in the painters footsteps", where conventions were, primarily, influenced by the patterns and styles of Indian art. Gutman also recognises that Indian photography comes directly out of Indian visual culture and pattern-making. Traditionally, Indian paintings had a flat perspective and all spaces were active; there was no concern for perspective or vanishing points. The picture field in Indian painting is a conceptualised space, not relevant to the physical world; this contrasts with Western arts obsession with 'realism', prior to the advent of modern art and photography. Realism, the foundation of Western photography, refers to the depiction of subjects as they appear in nature, without embellishment or interpretation (Gombrich 2006). Consequently,

certain photographic conventions have developed that are uniquely Indian in character, and are notably unconcerned with the depiction of reality.

Pinney (2003b:273-275) proposes that what matters in Indian images is the prospect of an escape from time and place. He suggests that the monocular frame of the camera itself, from an Indian perspective, is restrictive. As a result, Indian photography has adapted other methods to help liberate the images from the defined, fixed lens and frame. Liberating from a fixed technological position has resulted in specific methods and photographic conventions being adapted to reflect the nature and character of Indian culture. Some examples of adaptations include, split portraits, montage, backdrops, costumes, painted photographs, and embellished framing. For Pinney (2003b), Indian photography uses the 'unknowability' of the image to represent an Indian way of seeing the world.

Social and economic forces also influenced how photography developed in the vernacular of India. The access and affordability of photography was relative to the heirachical structure of Indian society; those with low incomes were unable to afford cameras, consequently, vernacular photography developed initially in photographic and mobile street studios. Most photographic research in India has studied these forms of professional photographic practice (MacDougall & MacDougall 1996; McNaughton & McHoul 2002; Pinney 1997; 2002 ; 2004 ; 2008). Studio photography helped to define the types of photographs taken and the conventions that developed. Clients wanting photographs would be reliant on the studio's facilities and the photographer's preferences for what and how images would be taken.

As previously stated, photography also influences its surrounding environment. Therefore, photography can be seen to have influenced Indian society. Firstly, photography has influenced the style and function of Indian image making. For example, prior to photography, painted portraits were always profiled: only gods and kings had faces. Photography dramatically changed this visual perspective. It also shifted the function of images as predominantly representations of religious and royal figures, to other groups. Eventually, photographic portraiture moved into the vernacular, and became available to other castes and groups in Indian society; those that could afford photo portraits could now possess them (Pinney 2008:137).

Photography has also influenced the role of women in images. Initially, Indian women were not permitted to be photographed because of the tradition of *purdah* (screening women from men and strangers) (Sharma 1990:2). In response to this restriction, British women photographers created Zenanas; mobile photographic studios made especially for Indian women. Eventually the practice of *purdah* diminished, and women and husbands could be photographed together. This changed the visual representation of marriage in India, where the marriage image was constructed around the concept of couple, rather than a patrilineal representation (*gotra)*. Nevertheless, some fundamental traits still persisted with these changes. The photographic image, in the vernacular, has continued to perform as a representation of aspirations and achievement. Consequently, photography was an agent and catalyst for change in Indian society, where photography expanded and changed how people expressed themselves. In the Indian migrant context, photographs have continued to represent aspirations and achievement and have also impacted upon their surrounding environment.

Mohini Chandra (2000) in his article, 'Pacific Album: Vernacular Photography of the Fiji Indian Diaspora', gives the closest account of Indian photographic conventions found in a migrant community. His research found a variety of Indian photographic conventions in Fijian/Indian images, as well as, new forms that represent the migrant experience. Firstly, he found the frequent use of beach backdrop, and interprets this to represent the ambiguity of the Indian situation in Fiji, "how it should be, but isn't". Chandra's article notes the use of albums or envelopes for the storage of images. It was also common to find both formal and informal, studio and amateur, ancient and recent photography, covering the walls, and any other display surface. He described the eclectic mix of photographs, as acting as a montage, collapsing time and space, and telling the shared experiences of migration. The older form of displays in homes, when photographs were a rare commodity, included photos of ancestors, the deceased (particularly fathers), as well as, religious and political figures. These were displayed in honour above doorways or high on a wall (Chandra 2000:240). Chandra mentions the importance of text (inscription) on the photographs as an important autobiographical form of communication. The inscription helps to follow the exchange and movement of these images. He suggests that given the lack of official archiving of Fijian/Indian photographs, these inscriptions are an important form of vernacular testimony (Chandra 2000:240). One obvious and significant difference for Indian migrants in Christchruch, was the lack of Indian studio photographers, as found in Fiji.

As MacDougall (2006b) claims, the conventions found embedded in Indian photographic practices are perceived as a way to add something to oneself; the altered image attests to the

possibilities within. The personal photographic archives of Indian migrant communities reflect these new possibilities. With reference to members of the Gujarati Christchurch group and their own photographic practices, I am careful to note the potential display of cross-cultural practices. Photographic conventions from both New Zealand and Indian contexts are embedded within the images presented by the participants. In keeping with the notion of photographic agency, I also claim that photographs sent back to the family home in India have, in turn, influenced the nature of photographic practices in these settings. For example, the best photographs taken in Christchurch were sent home to India and displayed on the living room wall as a substitution for the absence of persons. They were also sent as signifiers of achievement and prosperity in New Zealand. Photographs portraying the negative aspects of their migration and personal struggle were not sent. This reinforces the use of photographs to portray a 'better-than-it-is reality'. This claim questions the role photographic images played and still play in encouraging ongoing migration to New Zealand.

The early Gujarati migrants who came to Christchurch at the turn of the 20th century came from adverse social and economic circumstances, due to floods and famine. With little money and resources, the men worked as labourers, hawkers, and bottle washers, sending remittances back to their family in Gujarat (Leckie 2007); (Indian Sports 1987). Consequently, photographs were taken in later years when families could afford studio portraits and/or cameras. Photographs were made in both Indian studios, while on their visits back to the village home, or in a photographic studio in Christchurch. Consequently, the participants' photographic archives contained images that displayed both Indian and Western style portraiture.

From the support of the above theoretical perspectives, I claim that photographs are socially interactive with those that view them, and that they influence their surrounding social environments and relationships. With specific reference to migrant settings, photographs interact and influence both sending and receiving societies. Therefore, vernacular photographs perform as a referent of the migrant experience, and ultimately represent the cross-cultural and transnational nature of this community, mirroring their social world and experiences.

Transnational Images, Social Networks and the Chakra Wheel

The photographs of this Gujarati Christchurch group reflect their complex circumstances, mirroring their transnational situation. The photographs represent their ties and continued relationships with their current home in New Zealand and their cultural homeland of Gujarat. Throughout this thesis, Gujarat is frequently referred to as the 'motherland', implying the place of one's roots, birth and belonging. I use the term transnationalism broadly when referring to how photographs are found to reflect social networks, adaptations, and transformations that incorporate both Gujarati and New Zealand social contexts. For Vertovec (2004a; 2004b:3), a transnational situation exists when "actual exchanges of resources or information, or marriages or visits, take place across borders between members of a diaspora themsleves or with people in the homeland. To be transnational means to belong to two or more societies at the same time". This explaination fits with the circumstances described by the participants in this project. Their photographs will depict this in a visual and symbolic way.

The participants at the centre of this research belong to a collective of individuals who are linked together by a shared history, point of origin, language, religion, and social network. This participant group is not inclusive of all members of the Gujarati/Christchurch community, however, they do see themselves as clearly belonging to a group that has been living in Christchurch, since the turn of the 20th century.

Given the cross-cultural nature of this group, it is no surprise that one of the key themes presented in this research is cultural continuity and transformation. This theme fits with previous migrant research in anthropology that has concerned itself with social fields and networks created in migrant contexts. As Olwig (2007) explains, migrant studies have traditionally used a linear perspective following a line from point of origin to point of settlement. Olwig suggests that thinking in terms of networks explains more adequately the complex and shifting relationships experienced by individual migrants.

To make sense of Indian migrant networks I introduce the metaphor of the Chakra Wheel to help explain these networks in a visual and symbolic way. The Chakra Wheel not only links with Indian mythology and spiritualism, but also acts as a useful metaphor for the nature of migrant social networks found in this thesis and, I suggest, other migrant contexts. The spiritual concept of *Chakra*, originates from Hindu texts and is featured in Hindu and Buddist religious practices. The Indian Chakra, the Wheel of Law, as represented on the Indian flag, is a fitting metaphor for the social networks the participants and their photographs have within this research group. The Chakra Wheel, in a metaphorical sense, represents a continual

motion around a central point from which everything is radiating. The Chakra Wheel depicts transnational Indian migrant communities around the world.

The Chakra Wheel symbol found at the centre of the Indian flag.

The basic principle of the Chakra Wheel is: the circumference has no existence without the centre that subtends it (Lotus 2010). The wheel evokes the idea of rotation, of continual movement, where only the hub remains fixed. The participants' involved in this study and their photographs, can be described in this formation, where India, and, more specifically, the village and family home, remain at the centre of their social world. The Gujarati Christchurch community, are a point on the circumference, and their relationships and photographs travel backward and forward, with the centre of India as homeland, always as the stabilizing central point. These interactions are still essential to the Gujarati community in Christchurch even though some members of this group are now fourth generation Gujarati/New Zealanders.

The circular motion of photographs found in this research and their placement in both New

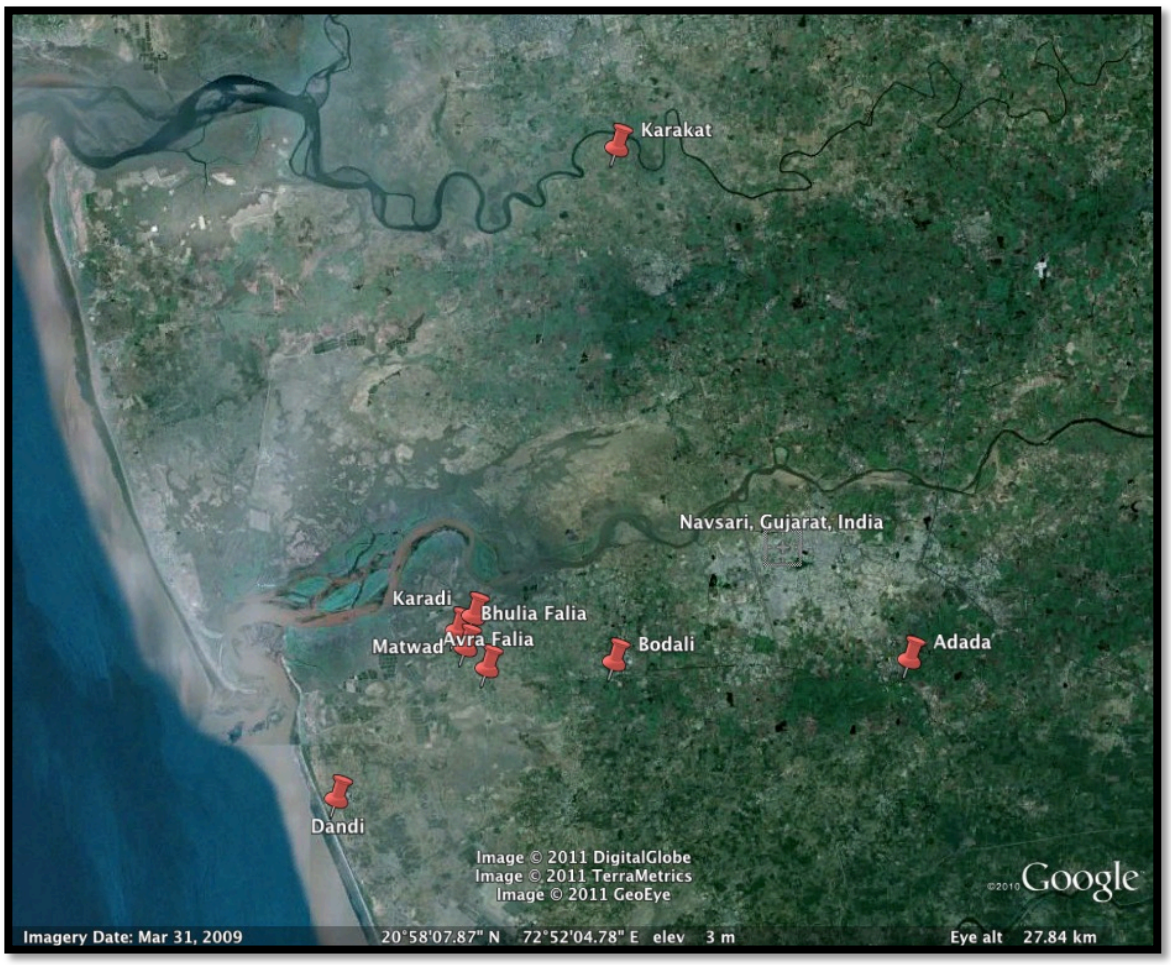
Zealand and Indian homes as a centre point of identification, challenges linear thinking. The patterning of photography and its relationship with this specific community, mirrors the circular form of Indian migration and the Chakra wheel. In this study, I found vernacular photographs helped to establish a sense of stability and community by journeying back to India with their custodians, or in place of them. They also recorded and documented a common history constructed from the New Zealand context. The photograph was utilised as a way of continuing links with India while, at the same time, constructing and stabilising a sense of belonging in Christchurch. Photographs were also sent along the circumference of the wheel to other Gujarati homes around the globe. The wheel can be perceived as spinning and moving around the central hub and, as the vernacular visual world is opening up to the internet and more prolific exchanges of images occur, the wheel spins faster.

The participants' photographs emphasised and reflected their circular relationship with India. The original Gujarati migrants began their journey from their village home, which I mark as the centre of the wheel (the hub). They travelled by sea to distant British colonies, to find alternative sources of income to remit back to their families, in their village. These original journeys across the seas to other lands were understood as essential and temporary. Due to the catastrophic floods and famine in southern Gujarat, at that time, the early settlers attempted to improve their family's economic circumstances through migration. Their primary aim, as found with other migrant groups, was to better their condition (Olwig 2007). These journeys to other locations outside of Gujarat, I picture as the spokes of the wheel, and Christchurch, is one point on the external rim of this wheel. There are many spokes and anchored points on this rim, representing journeys to, and from, the many sites of Gujarati

diasporas around the globe. The metaphor of the wheel implies movement around the hub, and movement along the spokes, backwards and forwards. I relate this thesis to the Chakra Wheel because of the prevalence of Gujarat and the 'motherland' of India in the social world of this research group, as demonstrated through their photographs.

India is 'motherland'. This was apparent in the participants' narratives and discourse, as well as in the formal speeches conducted at the community level. To refer to this group as a migrant community is inaccurate in a general sense, as they have been well established in New Zealand for the last four to five generations. The use of migrant terminology is perhaps more relevant in the context of ongoing marital and kinship links with their Gujarati homeland. Kinship links with present-day India are still ongoing through chain migration and present-day marriages. Family members are still migrating from Gujarat to Christchurch, and some marriages are still organised through family and village networks. As with the participants in this thesis, their marriage partners may be Indian-, or New Zealand-born. Therefore, the boundaries of this community are fluid and constantly shifting to accommodate the varied backgrounds and contexts surrounding its members. However, 'the motherland' (India) is still found at the centre of its identity. The following maps provide a visual marking of the geographical location of the Gujarat state in India and the location of the villages that exist at the centre of the participants' Chakra Wheel.


Pakistan
नया दिल्ली New Delhi
Nepal
Kathmandu काठमांडौ
Thimphu
Bhutan
Bangladesh
Dhaka
Gujarat
Navsari
Navsari, Gujarat, India
India
Arabian Sea
Bay of Beng
US Dept of State Geographer
© 2011 Mapabc.com
© 2011 Europa Technologies
© 2011 Google
Sri Lanka
Colombo
©2010 Google
19°06'19.38" N 75°23'03.24" E elev 397 m
Eye alt 2779.48 km



The position of the participants' family homes and villages in the region of Navsari, Gujarat.

Gujarati/New Zealanders in Christchurch

Interest in Indian migration to New Zealand is a recent phenomenon, especially, since the changes to immigration policies and ensuing migrant influxes during the 1980s. As Fuchs, Linkenbach and Malik (2010) claim, it is assumed that Indian migrant communities in New Zealand are homogenous, whereas, in reality, there are many different Indian groups. This research group exemplifies this point. Even though there are many Gujarati migrants in New Zealand, this group defines itself by both its Gujarati origins and early migrant history. The existence of Gujaratis in New Zealand since the early 1900s is not well known. As Parvati

(2010) states,*"It has never been made known that Indians have been here for years – they are the one's that have paved the way for the others. The newer migrants don't realise there were migrants way back then, and the difficulties they had to put up and persist with".*

The participants involved in this research project were very attached to their migrant history. The participants consistently repeated their ancestor's migrant story, especially stories of their survival, struggle, and achievement. They presented to me ancestral photographs, such as the one of Kara Ismail in the Preface, to trace back and make links with their ancestral migrant heritage. At times, the photographs provided these links, even though the photographs did not exist at the time of the narratives told.

Historically, little has been written about the Christchurch Indian Community. Jacqueline Leckie is the most prominent writer on Indian history in New Zealand. Her work is noteworthy in placing South Asian migrants into the early history of New Zealand, and marking their involvement in the development of New Zealand over the last century. Leckie (2007) mentions the Christchurch Gujarati settlers in reference to the first Gujarati Muslim settler, Mohammed Kara, and the bottle recycling businesses established by the early Gujarati migrants in Christchurch. The Christchurch Indian Association is also referenced in Kapil Tiwari's book *Indians in New Zealand: Studies in a Sub Culture* (2002). Santi Bhudia (1979) completed her MA History thesis in 1979, where she wrote a detailed history of the Christchurch Gujarati community, of which she is a member. Bernau (2005) completed an oral history of the Chinese and Indian diasporas in New Zealand and more recently Martin Fuchs, Antje Linkenbach and Aditya Malik (2010) conducted research with Indians in

Christchurch exploring the diverse social realities of groups, and individuals within this contested diaspora context. Sekhar Bandypadhyay (2010) has also recently edited a book that pulls together research around New Zealand, that is concerned with Indian local identities and global relations. The dominant research focus has been on the Auckland and Wellington regions, due to the large populations of Indian migrants in these areas. The research conducted has relied on the gathering of statistics, structured interviews, individual narratives and archival research. The topics covered deal with history, migration trends, settlement, identity, diaspora, ethnicity, cultural expression, and performance. By using a visual methodology, this research adds to the above, by providing supportive, and, at times, new insights. Because the data in this thesis is participant-led, the topics covered by this research are considered highly relevant. As mentioned earlier, this research emphasises the circular nature of the Indian migrant circumstance, and challenges previous New Zealand Indian migrant research that has concerned itself with New Zealand contexts only.

A detailed and thorough history of Indian migration to New Zealand has already been done sufficiently by the above authors. To set the context of this community, I have woven together a brief historical account from the existing literature, and from information presented by the participants themselves.

The history of Indian migration to New Zealand stretches back to the 1890s, when the first Indian settlers, Punjabi men, came to work as scrub cutters (Leckie 1998). The first Gujarati migrants began arriving at the turn of the century. As already mentioned, the precedent for this migration was predominantly economic. The region of Navsari, a south-western region

of Gujarat, experienced a severe flood, resulting in famine in 1895. The result was catastrophic to the region, with massive shifts of rural populations to townships to find work and food. The region of Navsari was predominantly agricultural and was affected dramatically by the ensuing food and economic crisis (Bhudia 1978-79; Hajratwala 2009; Leckie 2010a). As can be seen in the previous map, the villages, where the research participants' families originated, were situated close to the mouth of the Puna River and the surrounding alluvial flood plains. At the same time as the floods and famine, the region had also been struggling with the restructuring of its traditional agricultural economies through the introduction of taxes and the increasing commercialisation of agriculture and customary services by the British Imperial Government (Leckie 2010b:49).

After the abolition of slavery in 1850, the British were needing Indian labourers to work in their colonies. They offered indentured labour or paid passage as free settlers, to their East African, Pacific, and Caribbean colonies. The original Gujarati men who arrived in New Zealand were free settlers looking to work and improve the situation for their families. Their migration to New Zealand was temporary, leaving their wives at home and remitting money back to their families on a regular basis. They undertook long visits back to their village, when money was available (Bhudia 1978-79). Some of the stories of these early settlers suggest that they were on their way to Fiji and decided to disembark in New Zealand when the government offered them free entry. The majority of those whose end destination was New Zealand, chose to stay in the North Island, while some decided to go South. Why they chose to go to the South Island is unknown (Fuchs et al. 2010).

The original six settlers who arrived in Christchurch did not know each other. However, they came from villages in the same area, close to Navsari. They formed a small group, sharing a common origin, language, religion (except for one Muslim), and culture. They worked originally as bricklayers and labourers, and later established bottle-washing and dealing businesses. They also, initially, shared the same living quarters for cheap rent, heating, and support. The supportive relationships that developed between the men, underlie the continued bonds and social networks that exist today. The early Gujarati migrants in Christchurch formed tight cultural boundaries, not only to emphasize their homeland ties, cultural familiarity, and common goals, but also as a consequence of being marginalized by a predominantly European community. The participants have come to understand their ancestral migrant story as one that is underlain by the collaboration and support of the original settlers.

Religion was not presented as a distinguishing boundary, even though most of the early Gujarati migrants were Hindu and one family was Muslim. However, Hindu practices and rituals were dominant within this group, until other Muslim families arrived and a separate Muslim community developed. Regardless of religious differences, these families are still linked today by their common origins and history.

A persons caste/*jati* was not presented as a defining boundary given that they all came from the same Koli *jati*. During the research, participants referred to caste only briefly, in reference to their family names. Their ancestors who settled in Christchurch chose to leave off their caste name once they began establishing their lives permanently in Christchurch. The reason

for removing the caste name was not certain. It was suggested that the caste name was no longer relevant in the New Zealand context, and its removal also helped to assist non-Indian New Zealanders to differentiate one Indian family from the next.

The participants were unclear as to when and why the Christchurch Gujarati group began to see themselves as permanent settlers. However, they still returned home to the 'motherland' when finances would permit. These visits back to their village home were undertaken when it was time to find a wife and marry, or to reconnect with other family. All of the participants in this study have returned to the village as children and later as adults; these visits could take several months or up to a couple of years. This appears to be both an expectation and a way to maintain cultural continuity and identity. The movement of families backwards and forwards from the village to Christchurch has been consistent over time. Today, the length of visit is shorter due to the ready availability of air travel and the restriction of ongoing work commitments.

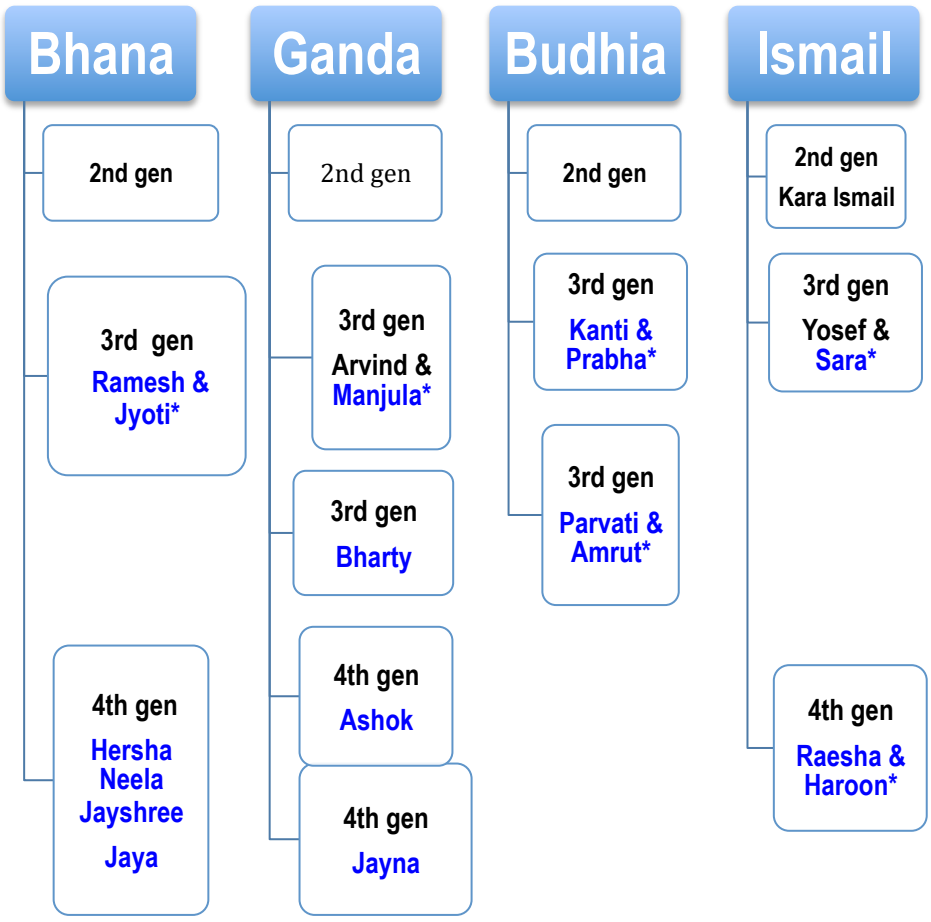
The Restricted Immigration Act in 1921 resulted in this Gujarati group remaining small and stable over many decades. It developed slowly as brothers and uncles migrated to help with businesses, and existing wives and new wives came from Navsari to live with their husbands. It was not until 1972 that immigration regulations loosened and allowed non-white professionals to come to New Zealand. In 1986 there were further changes to Government immigration regulations allowing for skills-based entry. This resulted in an influx of both Fijian Indians and economic migrants from India. Some of these migrants also originate from Gujarat State. Consequently, there are now a larger number of Gujarati migrants residing in

Christchurch, but there still exists an imagined boundary between those that are descendents of the original Gujarati settlers and newer migrants.

The isolation of the Christchurch community from the larger Indian populations in the North Island suggests that this community has developed somewhat differently. The small numbers and relatively static population from the 1920s to the 1980s allowed for a tight and closely bounded group to form. They originally lived in close proximity to each other, forming a social cluster in the south-east of the city. Even years later, the majority of participants live within the same suburban area of Christchurch, now further east of the city (note: since February 2011 earthquake this cluster has been disrupted). It is not uncommon for someone from this group to introduce themselves as a descendent of one of the early settlers, "I am (name)… my grandfather was one of the first Indian settlers in Christchurch". Evidence of the bond between these families will be reflected in the images presented throughout this project.

For the purposes of this project, the first Gujarati Indian settlers in Christchurch are termed the first generation of Gujarati/Christchurch settlers. The second generation are their sons who came out from India to help work in established businesses. The participants involved in this research are third and fourth generation. The participants defined themselves as Gujarati/New Zealanders or Gujarati/Kiwis. The following chart depicts the participants, their family of origin, and generation.

Participant Generational Chart



The above chart represents the generational positioning of participants with their forefathers, who were the first four, out of six, original Gujarati Indian settlers at the turn of the century. There are two Indian families not included in this research; they were were not included in this project, because they were not amongst those who volunteered at the onset of research. This chart is only specific to the participants involved in this project; it is not an inclusive genealogy of all descendants. The names at the top of the column are the original Indian migrants who settled in Christchurch at the turn of the century, and the names highlighted in

blue are participants in this project. Unlike European names, Gujarati names change for each generation. For each new generation, the last name of the father becomes the first name of the son (not including their jati name). To simplify the generational linkages I have chosen to use the current last name as the identifier for all previous generations.

In this thesis, I focus upon the personal photographs found in the homes of the above families. I use the participants' presentation of their own personal photographs as a way of gaining information about their perceptions, responses, experiences, and day-to-day lives. I propose that it is both the affective, material, and mobile agency of their photographs that allows them to communicate and express their social world. The following chapters will explain and demonstrate how photographs can be used as a way of gaining insight into the social lives of others.

Thesis Outline

In Chapter One, I examine the methodology of photo-elicitation and introduce the term auto photo-elicitation as the approach used in this research. A description of this approach and its assumptions will be supported by previous research studies that have used photo-elicitation as a form of data gathering. From these studies, I present a model of photo-elicitation that distinguishes between the degrees of participant authority apparent in various photo-elicitation methods. The foundation for the use of an auto photo-elicitation technique, in this thesis, will be justified from this model, and will be further supported by the discipline of phototherapy, which also espouses the benefits of self-presented images. The specific auto-driving methodology used in this thesis, entails the participants choosing their most

significant photographs and presenting them to the researcher. This chapter justifies the importance of participant authority in anthropological research and the benefits of auto photo-elicitation as a method of engagement and discovery.

Chapter Two introduces the Gujarati families involved in this research and their photographs. This chapter reflects on the role of photographs in everyday life, with a focus on the affective agency of specific images. I explore ancestral photographs, their elevated significance and *darshanic* qualities, and highligh their role in keeping deceased relatives present in the participants day-to-day lives. In this chapter, I will make strong links with Barthes' concept of *punctum* and the therapeutic nature of vernacular photographs as described in the discipline of phototherapy. I will extend the discussion on affective agency by suggesting that photographs in migrant communities also provide therapeutic agency for their viewers, by maintaining important social relationships and connections and ultimately assisting in an ongoing sense of well being.

Chapter Three discusses how Indian migrant photographs mirror the metaphor of the Chakra Wheel. The images presented exemplify how the tangibility and mobility of photographs is central to their privileged position within the homes of Gujarati families in both New Zealand, and their ancestral home in India. This chapter demonstrates how vernacular photographs are adaptive transitional objects. The vernacular photographs presented, mirror the social relationships of their custodians, and emphasise the importance of the 'motherland' and village home, to the participants' sense of self and belonging.

In Chapter Four, I examine how vernacular photographs have helped create and maintain the development and identity of this community. In this chapter, I argue that photographs have become a surrogate form of traditional archiving, in contrast to traditional verbal modes found in the village setting. This chapter, will suggest that photographs have adapted to the migrant situation to assure an ongoing knowledge system, of ancestral and familial linkages, especially when families are no longer living within the village setting. It will also demonstrate the ability of photographs to reflect the interdependent nature of this group and maintain its social narratives of belonging, over time.

Chapter Five considers current changes to vernacular photographs. I present the dilemma of photographs from printed to digital form. In this research context, the materiality and tangibility of the photograph is presented as central to its social agency. The participants in this research are resistant to changes in photographic form, especially changes that threaten the ability to hold and touch the physical image. This chapter will also discuss adaptations with regard to digital images, and the potential benefits and changes these may have in Indian migrant settings.

Chapter Six reviews the methodology of auto photo-elicitation and includes an evaluation of this methodology by the participants. Primarily, this evaluation will focuses upon the participants' authority in this process, and will rely on feedback from their experience of this approach. This chapter will conclude with a summary of the findings of the various chapters and discuss these in relation to the value of vernacular photographs in social science research,

concluding with future suggestions for the application of auto photo-elicitation techniques within migrant studies, and other forms of anthropological research.

A photo-montage of the participants photographs precedes each chapter. I have chosen to use photo-montage to signify the primary importance of the photographs presented in this thesis, and to reflect my visual experience when viewing these images. The montage serves to collapse both time and space and represents the layered and multidimensional nature of vernacular images. The positioning of the montage at the onset of each chapter reminds the reader that these images are at the centre of this enquiry, and attempts to negotiate a balance between text and images. The photographs included in the photo-montage will be specific to the themes and content of the following chapter.

Chapter One:

Auto Photo-elicitation

"The photographs are like a mirror for us. We can learn a lot of things by discussing the photographs. It is easier to speak while holding the pictures in our hand and while looking at the pictures. We can explain more when the pictures are close at hand." Samuels (2004 :1540)

A participant made the above comment to Jeffery Samuels (2004) during his research of *Sri Lankan Monastic Culture*. This comment summarises succinctly the nature of photographs in social science research. It touches on issues, such as the tangible quality of photographs; the ability of photographs to make interviews easier; the way they evoke information and responses; the personal reflexivity of photographs; and the ability to provide new knowledge and self-learning for both the researcher and participant. In the following chapter, I look more closely at the use of images in social science research with specific reference to photo-elicitation. Although the majority of literature supports the methodology of photo-elicitation, I argue that photo-elicitation encompasses different formats that vary in terms of participant authority. This chapter suggests that one cannot assume photo-elicitation to be a decentring approach in its own right.

This chapter will explain the theoretical foundations of photo-elicitation and discuss why it has been readily adopted into social science research. I present a review of existing literature, including an examination of various photo-elicitation studies and their particular

methodological approach. The varied approaches will be analysed from a participant authority perspective resulting in the development of a model that structures the varied photo-elicitation approaches in reference to the degree of participant authority they rely upon. The Participant Authority Continuum will reflect these differences in a visual way, speaking directly to the varied approaches, their aims, and outcomes.

The use of photographs in anthropological research has been through periods of rigorous critique. Historically, photography is described as a voyeuristic model of visual research, that allowed 'us' to view 'them'. More recently, photography has experienced a renewed vigour in research methodology. This has followed, simultaneously, with a turn away from language in qualitative research (Hurworth 2005). The reviewed position of photography in the social sciences assumes that photographs have multiple unfixed indexes. They are no longer perceived as agents of truth and fact, but are predominantly understood as both objective and subjective, depending on the context of their creation and viewing. Photo-elicitation, in this regard, is considered an appropriate methodology within the social sciences. It is utilised across disciplines, including psychology, health sciences, cultural and consumer studies. It engages, patient, client, participant, or consumer, in the interview process. The use of photographs to elicit information speaks directly to the power of the image, and its ability to evoke perceptual responses, experienced as thoughts, emotions, or sensations. It is commonly believed that using the visual in research methodology provides for alternative points of view. As Marcus Banks (2006) claims, by using visual methods researchers, "get closer to seeing the world in a metaphorical sense, as their research subjects see the world".

Photo-elicitation encourages a different approach to verbal interview methodology. There are many variations of photo-elicitation approaches in social science research, and some models have been outlined in the literature. This chapter proposes that the method itself is highly flexible and can be used in a variety of ways that have yet to be analysed in the academic arena. I argue that just as the photograph is inherently uncontainable, so too is its use as a methodological tool in social science research. Some researchers suggest photo-elicitation to be a more politically salient approach than traditional verbal interview methodologies, because it places the participant in an authoritative position. However, this chapter recognises that photo-elicitation approaches exist on a continuum of participant authority, from low to high.

Within photo-elicitation practices, there are differences in the level of participant authority, depending on how they are made, used and presented. How photographs are created, selected, and presented influences the level of participant authority experienced. Therefore, the application of photo-elicitation varies across disciplines and research projects, depending on the aims of the research.

The underlying link, which persists through all these discussions, is the importance of the visual image and its social agency. The photograph is entrenched in the social lives of people, and has adapted to varied social, cultural, and economic circumstances. Its prevalence in private spheres is often taken for granted and overlooked. Epstein et al (2006) comments that vernacular photography's most noteworthy quality is its familiarity. Photographs are also understood as records of reality and the past. They are user friendly, relatively inexpensive,

and available to most sectors of society. With relevance to social science research, photographs have the ability to gain new and alternate insights into people's private and social worlds.

Hurworth et al (2005), in their assessment of visual images in research, found the positives far outweighed the negative. They found the use of visual images in research: a) provided a means for getting inside a context; b) bridged psychological and physical realities; c) allowed the combination of visual and verbal language; d) reduced the need for written literacy; e) assisted in creating trust and rapport; f) presented the participant's perspective and raised issues significant to him or her; g) produced unpredictable information; h) promoted longer and more detailed interviews; i) encouraged participants to be active in the research process; k) helped guard against researcher's misinterpretation; and l) provided useful data.

Images provide researchers with a different order of data and an alternative to the way we have perceived data in the past (Prosser 1998:1). Edwards (1997:54) discusses the expressiveness of the photographic image as being central to the quality of the medium, in comparison to traditional, documentary, realist paradigms. The photographs greatest potential in anthropological research is its ability to question and arouse curiosity, to tell in different voices and see through different eyes.

Gold (2004 :1554) introduces another dimension, where visual documentation of participants lives demands the researcher to come into contact with the participant to a degree that exceeds what is applied in other methods, helping to correct academic distancing. Gold also

found that looking at images helps to establish rapport, often enhancing the quality of the interviews. Orobitg Canal (2004: 35) used photo-elicitation methods in her research of the *Pume village of Riecito.* She discovered that, photographs show what the anthropologist wants to show in its framing, and at the same time, allows us to see what was not intended, calling attention to aspects which are invisible to the ordinary eye.

The use of photographs in interviews with participants is noted as an effective methodology by many researchers'. In particular, the PEI (photo-elicitation interview) has become widely accepted in the field of anthropology in recent times. As Harper (2002 :13) claims, " Photo-elicitation evokes information, feelings and memories that are due to the photograph's particular form of representation". At the centre of photo-elicitation, is the notion that photographs have specific qualities that evoke responses, whether these responses are memories, thoughts, emotions, or sensations. These responses provide insights into the participants values, beliefs, attitudes and social systems.

Photo-elicitation in its conventional form, is a set of photographs assembled by the researcher and shown to the participant. It assumes that the chosen images will have some significance for the participant. Collier (1967), was the first to coin the term 'photo-elicitation', defining it as an interview stimulated and guided by images. Initially, this method entails the researcher presenting images they had taken of the participant's world and then asking open-ended questions about the images. By analysing this approach it was discovered, that the researcher knew very little about the cultural information contained in the images that they themselves had taken (Prosser 1998 :35). Collier (1967 :51) wrote, "no type of fieldwork requires better

rapport than in intimate photographic account of family culture". Collier proposed that photo-elicitation techniques used both alone and in conjunction with other methodologies can produce rich data. He also claimed, that pictures used in interviews, elicit a longer and more comprehensive interview, avoiding fatigue and repetition.

Harper (2002), notes that various forms of photo-elicitation may be used in social science research, but are not reported or analysed in research papers, however, it is under utilised in the social sciences. Consequently, the use of PEI (photo-elicitation interviews) has been largely taken for granted. Collier (2002), also believes photo-elicitation to be under-appreciated. He refers to its benefits in both direct and indirect analysis and its ability to provide an insider's point of view. The following scholars have focused on PEI and its efficacy as a methodology in their research projects.

Holzwarth (2006 :85), found that photo-elicitation allows for new and alternative information in comparison to verbal based research. Photo-elicitation challenges the conventional idea, that you can explore the social world by just asking questions. It relies on the visual plane, by being both familiar to popular culture while engaging the brain in a different way, drawing a different kind of response. Harper (2002), claims that photographs call forth associations, definitions or ideas that otherwise go unnoticed. Zambon (2005 :44), found that photo-elicitation methods generated more research data than quantitative methods and helped participants discuss issues that are often unexpected and unanticipated. Smith and Woodward (1999 :41), after using photo-elicitation, commented on their appreciation of visual communication when they discovered how images effect those who are not in the business of

understanding photographs. Clark–Ibanez (2004), commented that photographs used in photo-elicitation interviews have a dual purpose: firstly, the researcher can use them as a tool to expand on questions, and secondly, participants can use them to provide a unique way to communicate about their world. Winddance Twine (2006), discusses the use of photo-elicitation techniques in researching family photos. He claims that photo-elicitation interviews generate data that complement and challenge field notes, participant observations and provide a rich source of data.

In summary, recent scholarship holds that photo-elicitation interviews do the following:

- Ease rapport and lessen awkwardness by providing something to focus on.
- Providing structure for the interview.
- Facilitate questions; stimulate memories.
- Capture and introduce content that may be overlooked.
- Generate information that may be apparent to the participant, but invisible to the researcher.
- Provide distance and a third dimension; a safe space.
- Evoke different sensory and affective responses.
- Offer an alternative to verbal interaction.
- Are concrete tangible objects that remain in view throughout the interaction, and can be relooked at in the future?
- Their examination may be of benefit for both researcher and participant.
- They possess their own social history.
- Give the participant greater control and sense of authority in the research process.

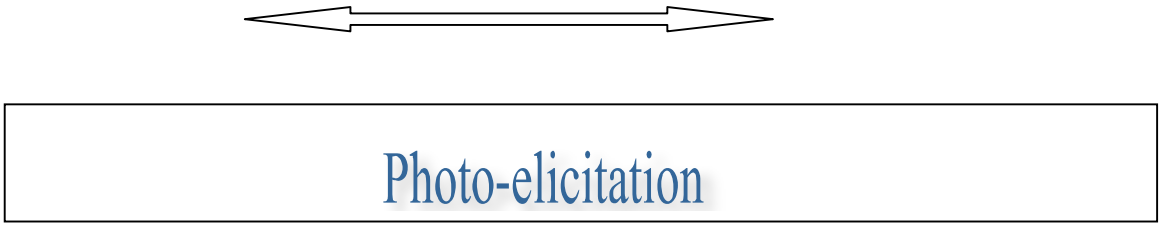
Harper (2002), and Epstein et al (2006), both emphasise that one of the primary advantages of photo-elicitation is its ability to decenter authority. This specific advantage appears to underline the theoretical positioning of photo-elicitation as an appropriate post-modern research tool. The redefined relationship of authority and the collaborative approach, both attempt to deconstruct the previous critique of photography in ethnographic research, and its implicit role in the power and domination of the colonial gaze. Harper (2002 :15) suggests, that photo-elicitation adds to the post-modern dialogue, where the interview process is based on the authority of the subject, rather than the researcher. The photo-elicitation interview redefines the relationship between the subject and the researcher.

To extend this reversal, photo-elicitation techniques have moved further away from conventional approaches and have become further decentered, allowing for the subject to control the images presented through either, self photography or the choosing of photographic images to be discussed. This form of photo-elicitation is described as 'auto driving', where the participant produces the image (Zambon 2005 :39). Clark-Ibanez (2004), also writes about the 'auto-driven' interview, claiming that research bias is removed by using images selected or taken by the participant. Samuels (2004 :1528), used an auto-driven photo-elicitation approach in his research with Sri Lankan Monks. He found the auto-driven approach evoked greater descriptions from his participants, and their responses were more affectively charged than responses in verbal based interviews. Auto-driven photographs effectively bridge the worlds of the researcher and researched.

Photo-elicitation has some ethical and methodological challenges (Epstein 2006). Firstly, who should take the photograph? and secondly, how should the photographs be integrated into the interview? The following diagram simplifies the continuum of photo-elicitation and participant authority and the consequent methodological approaches used by researchers in the literature.

The Photo-elicitation Continuum

Low Participant Authority — High Participant Authority



a) Images chosen by interviewer, outside participants world.	b) Images taken by interviewer, of participants world.	c) Images chosen by participant, from participants world	d) Images taken by participant

a) Images chosen by Interviewer outside participants world:

This approach was used by researchers such as Smith and Woodward (1999), Theo Van Leeuwen and Carey Jewitt (2002). The images are taken from alternate sources and are

presented to research participants for comment. The context of this approach is usually directed by goal oriented research, such as marketing or image archives. This particular approach is strongly controlled by the researcher, where they ask participants to respond to selected images. The aim of this form of photo-elicitation, is to obtain the participants responses to the researchers questions. Participant authority is low within this approach; the images used may have little relevance to the participants social world.

b) Images taken by interviewer of participants world:

This approach has been commonly applied in anthropological research. Collier, (1967) Beilin(2005), Pink(2001), Gold(2004), Orobitg Canal (2004) and Harper (2002) have all used this approach in their specific research projects and have analysed and presented its efficacy in the literature. Even though, it is a popular methodological approach in visual anthropology, it still sits at the lower end of participant authority. This approach places at its centre the anthropologists frame of reference, by taking the photos of the participants world for the participant to view and discuss. In terms of decentering authority, this approach allows the photographer to set the framework for discussion based upon their own observations. The critical question the researcher needs to ask is: what do they take images of and how much of their own assumptions and subjective responses direct the creation of images? Samuels (2004) discusses his own ethnographers bias, in his article on *Sri Lankan Monastic Culture*, where he compares his earlier verbal interviews and photographic content with the results of auto-driven images made by the Monks themselves. He discovered that his previous study of religious activity failed to see or understand the importance of the ‘sweeper’ (keeping religious areas clean) in monastic culture, as repeatedly presented by the Monks in their own

images. He uses this as an example of his own research assumptions and how auto-driven images can present unexpected realities.

c) Images chosen by participant from participants world:

This approach is uncommon in the literature, but some intriguing research has been conducted using family albums, see Hirsch (1997); Twine (2006); Rose (2003); and Pink (2001). This approach successfully decenters authority by allowing the participant to refer to personal images, and by using images that are already embedded within their social reality. This approach fits into the concept of auto-driving because the participant is given control over choices and responses. This type of research requires an intimate interview process and often occurs within the private home. The level of intimacy, and the 'high context' of family images, makes this a complex approach. Especially in terms of ethical issues regarding privacy and confidentiality, as well as, the potential for in-depth and intense, personal responses. The images in this approach may also have various social histories that the participant may not have information about, therefore, it may require the researcher to gain additional knowledge about specific cultural and historical photographic conventions surrounding the context of images.

d) Images taken by participant:

This approach is the ultimate form of participant authority; it allows the participant creative control when taking and presenting images. It sits at the high end of the participant authority continuum. Researchers such as Zambon(2005), Gauntlett and Holzworth (2006), Samuels (2004), Clark-Ibanez (2004) have all used this approach in their research. This approach is

inductive and subjective, disrupting the power dynamics involved with regular interviews (Clark-Ibanez 2004). As Samuels (2004 :1530) states, "using the participant's photographs in the interview process gives primacy to their world and provides a greater opportunity for them to disclose their own sense of meaning to the researcher". The documentary, photographic organisation Photovoice (Blackman 2007), uses this approach as both a form of research, and a way to empower participants and communities. Photovoice believes that the decentering of authority reasserts and encourages the participant and their community towards self-development. Samuels (2004) suggests from his research that photographs taken by participants, act as an anchor for describing their world and daily experience, as well as a catalyst for remembering.

Whatever the approach taken in photo-elicitation research, there are cautions surrounding this methodology. Schwartz (1998 :123) warns that viewing photography is a patterned social activity, influenced by social context, cultural conventions and group norms. So that methodological strategies can be planned, some prior knowledge of the participants experience of photography is required. Prosser and Schwartz (1998 :125) also emphasise the need for the researcher to understand the processes of encoding meaning in which he or she has engaged. Clark-Ibanez (2004) explains that PEI methodology has challenges that go beyond word alone interviews. PEI interviews are often conducted in more intimate spaces such as peoples homes and living rooms; he describes this situation as delicate. As previously mentioned, ethical issues of confidentiality and privacy are of primary importance.

With reference to auto-driving techniques, the researcher needs to acknowledge the importance of 'absence'; there will be images not presented or included in the interview. Acknowledging this absence and questioning what images are not included can also be particularily informative of the participants world. In Hurworth, et al (2005), three different methods of photo-interviewing were evaluated. Their overall assessment recognised some potential difficulties for the researcher. The first issue was appropriate selection of images by the participant, and the second was the failure of the participant to present negative images. Pink (2001 :75) comments that it is not only the photographs that people keep that are of interest, but those that they reject. However, Clark-Ibanez (2004 :1508) perceives the absence of negative images as a positive, where auto-driving allows the participant to present "the very best parts of their lives" which, in turn, empowers them. Leibenberg (2009:447) agrees with this view suggesting that, photo-elicitation allows participants to produce a desired representation of self.

As discussed previously, photo-therapy and auto photo-elicitation share similar ideas and processes. Weiser (1988:245) explains a similar process and outcome in her description of phototherapy:

> The selection process: what and when to shoot; which to keep from the whole roll; which make it into an album or personal collection; which are given/kept/framed/ripped up; which are grieved most when lost or destroyed, and why. All of these are statements of self, of personal uniqueness, and they stand for us not only to ourselves, but to others who view them.

The participants images presented in this thesis are most certainly entangled in a process of choice and presentation. The photographs presented in this research project have been through a selection process controlled solely by the participant, where they are the custodian and curator of their own photographic presentation. This thesis supports and respects the participants selection process and unique representations.

Another unique facet of photo-elicitation is the complexity of the data gathered. Not only are there verbal recordings of interviews, the researcher also has images which need to be documented and collated in conjunction with the verbal information gathered. This requires rigorous and strict data labelling and cross referencing (Clark-Ibanez 2004). The analysis of data and presentation is the final stage in the process of photo-elicitation, and is often neglected in the discussions around this form of methodology.

Careful consideration needs to be given to the presentation of research findings that are predominantly based on 'the visual'. As Pink(2004) rightly points out, photography and writing make different contributions to anthropology. This thesis, supports the idea that photographs in research have the unique ability to convey information or affect in ways that words cannot. Rose (2007 : 255) presents the paradox of this approach, where visual images still need some written context to make their effects evident. However, the balance between text and visual imagery needs to be carefully considered. Therefore, attached to this methodology is the complex issue of negotiating text and visual images in academic presentation.

Another difficult issue that arises with auto-driven methodologies is how to maintain participant authority throughout the analysis and presentation of research data. Auto-driving approaches emphasise, the agency of the image, and participant responses as the centre of enquiry. The presentation possibilities of photo-elicitation research appears endless, particularly with the growing application of digital technologies. The presentation of visual images in this form of visual research can range from: image description translated into text; images presented within text; images presented with no text, as in exhibitions; photo diary or CD room; or images presented with participants voice, either as supporting captions, or as audio voice over.

Orobitg Canal (2004 :44) promotes the expressive qualities of the image and believes that a 'new anthropological language' is developing from analysing the visual. Collier (2002 :52) also agrees that photo-elicitation requires some care with the recording and analysis of images and responses. Collier (2002 : 59) asks; "how are we to translate the richness and promise of our visual discoveries into the deceptive world of words?" He suggests that one way around this is, to write from the images themselves, rather than the data or analysis. In this way, your knowledge remains fresh and translation direct. Other researchers have used multiple approaches. Hurdley (2007) researched the 'taken for granted' conventionalised display spaces in the home, particularly the living room mantelpiece. Her methodology included the taking of images by both herself, and her participants. These images formed two sets of visual data. Hurdley presents this approach as a way of opening up multiple perspectives. Her dissemination of this information speaks to these multiple perspectives, by

presenting them unedited in digital format, as well as amalgamated as text. Hurdley describes the use of auto-driven photography in research as a complex method.

It would appear that the presentation of photographs in anthropological research is currently at an experimental stage, where text still dominates academic research. However, there appears to be a growing interest in alternate ways of presenting image-based research. Collier J(1967), Prosser(1998), Collier M. (2002), Leeuwen (2002), Pink (2007a; 2004), Rose (2007) and Stanczak (2007) have authored books which specifically address visual image research methodology and attempt to create workable models of practice. Photo-essays and photo-montage are some of the ways photo-elicitation interviews are being translated into research presentations. These types of presentation challenge the viewer to reach conclusions based upon the images as a primary source of communication. Text is creatively negotiated and amalgamated into the research depending on the researchers aims and the intended audience. A more in-depth look at the various presentation methods of visual image research is beyond the scope of this essay. The significant point to be made is the inclusion of presentation style as an important part of photo-elicitation methodology. One of the ways I have addressed presentation style in this thesis, is the use of photo-montage. Photo-montage is used to negotiate a balance between images and text helping to keep the photographs at the forefront of the thesis.

As discussed in this chapter, the argument for elevating the importance of the visual image in anthropological research is well substantiated. The use of photo-elicitation as a constructive and effective research methodology is widely supported in visual research literature.

However, little critique or analysis has occurred regarding the specific applications of photo-elicitation in anthropological research, and the various methods that exist within this methodology. By looking more closely at the breakdown of the different levels of participant authority in photo-elicitation methods, it becomes clear that, auto-driven techniques access more directly the perceptions and experiences of participants. The method of auto-driving asserts not only the participants role in research, but also the role of photography in anthropology. The Participant Authority Continuum helps to emphasise the multiple and varied approaches that exist within photo-elicitation methodology. I hope that the level of participant authority in photo-elicitation methodology will be further analysed in future anthropological research.

Research Methodology

This section outlines the auto photo-elicitation methodology used in this research project. With relation to the Participant Authority Continuum model, this project used:

c) Images chosen by the participant from the participant's world.

The participants in this project were volunteers from a Gujarati group in Christchurch. I selected this group because of their strong social and cultural associations and comon migrant history. The process of accessing members of this community entailed a top down approach. I began by contacting the president of the Christchurch Indian Association by email, where he requested a meeting with me to explain my research. Following this meeting, I was invited to meet with the Association's committee. The meeting occurred at the Christchurch Indian Association community hall and the project was included on the agenda. After this initial

screening, I was formally invited to attend the Navratri celebration at the community hall the following Saturday night. My son and I attended the Navratri celebration, where my research project was formally introduced to the community as part of the evening's proceedings and formal speeches. The response to the project was positive, with most participants gathered from this one night.

Following the Navratri celebration, I phoned those that had volunteered to participate and arranged a meeting in their home, to explain the project in detail. At this initial interview I requested the participants to think about their most significant photographs and present them at a follow-up interview, two weeks later. The participants unanimously consented to the filming and recording of the interview. They were happy for copies of their photographs to be made, and unanimously agreed to waiver confidentiality of names because of the historical significance of their narratives and images. In accordance with auto-driven photo-elicitation approaches, the participants chose what and how many images they would present. At the initial interview, they were interested in presenting their photographs and were looking forward to talking about them. They all consistently commented on the significance of photographs in their lives. Initially, the participants struggled with the idea of self-authority, they were unsure about choosing images, and worried that I had my own agenda, and wanted to please me. It was therefore necessary to explain why I was using this method of photo-elicitation, and the importance of their voice and authority in this process.

The second interview involved the use of video and photographic equipment; at times this was awkward due to my lack of expertise in filming techniques. The participants were

generous in allowing the filming of the interviews. While initially a little self conscious, they forgot the filming and immersed themselves in the presentation of their photographs. The interviews would take between 1.5 to 3 hours. Time passed quickly and at times, I needed to end the interview, for fear of going on too long and tiring the participant. The interviews were usually weekday evenings after dinner, with participants needing to work the next day. Most of the interviews occurred at the dining table or in the lounge room.

The use of photo-elicitation provided an opportunity to enter into the participants' private world in both a metaphorical sense through their photographs, but also in a physical sense, into their private space, a world in which I would normally have no access. I found during this research, similar to Leibenberg's (2009) experience, by focusing upon and discussing the participants photographs, the visual image itself helped to facilitate the articulation of their lived realities, ultimately bringing my research closer to the particpants lives.

There were a total of ten participants with three interviews each; I spent approximately 8 hours with each participant. The first interview did not include the presentation of photographs. However, the following contact time focused on the photographs presented, the narratives they articulated, and the responses they experienced. The participants ranged in age from 17 to 65. The predominant age group was 50 to 65. The youngest age group was the children of participants 16 – 40. The adults interviewed were self employed, working in service industries, or studying at school or university. They were all involved in the Gujarati community, and most were members of the Christchurch Indian Association.

The participants' religious affiliations were predominantly Hindu, with a few non-practicing and one Muslim family. All families were descendants of the first Gujarati Indian settlers in Christchurch, originating from the region of Navsari. This historical link was unknown at the beginning of this project and became evident as a significant unifying factor, early in the project. This factor influences the character and nature of this community in many significant ways, making this project bounded by shared histories, origins and experiences.

The participants were organised for the first interview and had thought carefully about what photographs were most significant. The relevant photographs, albums and frames, were set aside. Sometimes, significant photographs had not been found, but later included. The following chapters will present in detail some of the photographs presented and how these images helped to support the participants narrative and world view. The chapters are organised along common themes and threads.

Presentation and Analysis of Photographs

Because vernacular photographs are complex and multidimensional, the presentation of these images needs to acknowledge the dynamic and shifting qualities of the photographs themselves. As suggested by Collier(2002), to aid in the difficulty of translating visual findings into text, this analysis is written from the images themselves. Wherever possible, the voice of the participant is used to inform the reader. The précis for each photograph or group of photographs begins with an introduction of the participant, followed by their reasons for presenting the photograph.

During the analysis of these images, I aimed to think about the presentation of these photographs in a similar light to Barthes *punctum* and *studium*, or in other words 'on the surface' or 'below the surface' of the image. The analysis of the 'surface of the image' included, the photograph and prototype; its indexical and descriptive information; its materiality and its historical and cultural relevance. When analysing 'below the surface' of the image, I reflected on the presentation as a performance or enunciation. In reference to Biddle's analogy of 'enunciation', I focused on the affective relationship the participant had with the photograph, and the responses and experiences it evoked.

Model of Analysis

1. The presented photograph
2. Participant's background and context
3. Participant's significant photographs
4. 'On the surface' of the image
5. 'Below the surface' of the image

The participants have unanimously consented to have their names and photographs included in this thesis. Because a historical narrative is central to the identity of this group, it felt appropriate to allow for the publishing of their names and images. For the participants, these images and their stories are additional records for their own archives. Where vernacular photographs are central to research it is vital to acknowledge that confidentiality is difficult to uphold. Therefore, I believe that participant authority is essential in determining the information included in the presentation of this form of research.

Given the textual emphasis of this thesis, the observations and comments I make about the participants and their photographs can only be a translation in an inexact form. The data recorded on video enabled me to examine more closely the spoken and unspoken responses and interactions of the participants. It is crucial for me, to emphasize that the experience of viewing the participants' photographs was one of privilege and intimacy. In this thesis, photographs are presented with veneration and respect for each participant, their ancestors and the images themselves.

The use of auto photo-elicitation and personal photographs allowed the participant to define and construct the nature of this research. This made for research outcomes that were closer to the participants lived reality. Because this approach provides a non-linguistic experience, it is particularly appropriate for research that is cross-cultural, or potentially difficult to engage with, due to language difficulties or highly affective circumstances. As previously claimed, it is the universality and familiarity of photographs that allow them to act as effective mediators in anthropological research. The depth and detail of the following chapters will exemplify the suitability and applicability of this approach in future anthropological and ethnographic research.

Photomontage A

Chapter Two:

Everyday Photographs – Affective, Devotional, and Therapeutic Images.

"Photographs provide a way of keeping visual recollections of the past safe from the dulling grasp of time; so we store them with care; cherishing them" (Berman 1993:13).

Throughout this study, I found photographs performed like a window, providing an expansive and endless view on the personal lives and experiences of the participants in this project. However, at times, I noticed the participants and their photographs focused 'inwards' onto a specific moment, experience or relationship. These experiences stood out during my interviews with participants. They were inward-focused moments that were highly affective and directly related to the relationship the participant has with the photograph, and, in Gell's terminology, the prototype (the person or place). These moments resembled Barthes' *punctum* and Biddles' *wordless occasion*'- a 'below the surface' interaction that pricked their attention. These moments were experienced, rather than described. I also observed a range of affect depending on the relationship the person has with the photograph itself. The following images were chosen for their significant level of affective agency. It was these images that were often presented as the most significant by the participants themselves. This category consisted of photographs that they view in their everyday life, or photos that held greatest meaning. They were often the photos that they thought about without needing to see them,

and that were present in their thoughts or lives on a daily basis. Consistently, it was photographs of deceased ancestors that fell into this category.

Given the significance of these photographs and their affective resonance for the participants, I argue that the presence of these photographs in their daily lives does more than remind them of the person or a place. I will show how some images, due to their cultural and religious context, embody persons and maintain personal relationships in the here and now, while others help to maintain a sense of self and identity. I claim that the significant value of these photographs is not only the information they contain and access, but also the role they play in maintaining social relationships and enhancing a sense of well-being. In other words, vernacular photographs can have both social and therapeutic agency.

Although vernacular photographs are highly affective, they also have a form of social agency that is therapeutic. Cosden and Reynolds (1982) help to explain this by referring to various activities in our day-to-day lives as therapeutic, making the distinction between 'therapy' and 'therapeutic activities'. They propose that activities that counter the stress of everyday life and contribute to peace of mind are inherently therapeutic in nature. Although my research is not problem-orientated, as is phototherapy, I am interested in the emotional benefits personal photographs create for their custodians in their day-to-day lives. The use of the term 'therapeutic' in this thesis challenges orthodox concepts of therapy and therapeutic outcomes, by suggesting that at times, day to day activities, such as viewing ancestral images or performing ritual and devotional practices, are therapeutic in nature, because they enhance and maintain a person's sense of well-being. This challenges and loosens our understandings

of the meaning of therapeutic response, by implying that therapeutic responses and effects can be experienced through, what is commonly regarded, as a normal activity. I propose there is no need for a formal therapeutic setting (with the client and therapist) for therapeutic agency to occur. I extend this notion to include the viewing of personal photographs. The images presented in this chapter will demonstrate the affective agency of photographs and their intrinsic therapeutic value.

The affective agency and therapeutic value of a photograph depends upon the context of its viewing. Pinney's photographic research is particularly relevant to this thesis as it centers on the social life of Indian photographs and, more precisely, religious and political photographs (1997; 1999,2002,2004). He references how images of religious deities are visually interactive with the viewer, where the image embodies the deity, and the deity sees the viewer. He describes this interaction as physically transformative, and uses the Indian term '*darshan'* to define this experience. This research will be adding to this body of knowledge by examining Indian vernacular photography, and in particular the *darshanic* experiences of ancestor worship found within this Gujarati migrant context.

The devotional attention given to ancestral photographs and the day-to-day interactions the participants have with them, clearly affirms family hierarchy and the authority of elders, while at the same time professing spiritual beliefs. Central to the notions of devotion and presence in the context of this Gujarati/Christchurch community, is the philosophy of reincarnation and darshanic practice. In Hinduism, the belief in reincarnation understands the body is a vessel for the soul and the soul remains unchanged at death coming back to earth as

a newborn body (The Oxford Dictionary 2011). This phenomenon is also known as transmigration of the soul. Therefore, Hindu ancestors are present spiritually. *Darshan* refers to, 'seeing and being seen by the divine' (Pinney 1997:106-110). This term is usually applied to the viewing of Hindu deities. However, in this case, the majority of participants, those that are Hindu, spoke of an interactive relationship with their ancestral photographs. Viewing ancestral photographs is a way to connect with them in the here-and-now. The following photographs and their interactions with the participants and their surrounding environment suggest that ancestral photographs, in this context, have become a form of *'darshanic'* experience. These photographs have been incorporated into rituals and daily *puja* (prayer) and make direct links with the spirit of their ancestors. The experience of ancestral presence is not new. In the past, these same exchanges would be made through prayer, songs, and the imagination. However, it appears that photographs have become instituted as a form of ancestral connectivity, particularly in migrant contexts where other ancestral sites of connection are no longer available, i.e. temples, the ancestral home and land.

The notion of 'presence' is exemplified by the images presented in this chapter. Pinney illuminates this idea when he refers to the ancestral photographs found in the village Bhatisuda, India. He states, that "photography never seems to merely duplicate the everyday world, but is, rather, prized for its capacity to make traces of persons endure (…) photography has potentially enormous implications for biographical perceptions and the development of new intimate forms of historicity" (Pinney 1997:149-150). As Pinney (1997) has rightly emphasized, in the Indian context, the visual is constantly stressed and "endows a great range of images with extraordinary power". Although Pinney's research has focused

more readily upon photographic images of religious deities, his understandings of photographs produced in India shed light on the potential for photographs to be influenced by overlapping visual practices.

Affective agency includes emotions as well as sensations such as smell, taste, touch, and sound. Pinney defines these responses as corporeal. He uses the concept of 'corpothetics' (embodied, corporeal aesthetics) to help define the transformative nature of images. With reference to the corporeal responses experienced by the participants, visual sensations were the most obvious; however, the sensation of touch was highly significant in the interactions between participants and their photographs. This ranged from the need to hold the photograph while engaging with the image; caressing the surface of the photograph; to applying other objects such as flowers or marking the person in the photograph with a talik on their forehead, as if they are physically touching the person in the image itself. Other sensations such as taste and sound were also described and experienced while participants engaged with their photographs. The tangibility and holding of the photograph is presented as a key theme in Chapter Five. In addition to these embodied corporeal aesthetics, I include emotion as a significant affective response.

From the interplay of the above theoretical frameworks, I surmise that the viewing of vernacular photographs is a multidimensional experience, at times operating at a cognitive level, such as Barthes' *studium*, and at other times, a more affective, sensory, and therapeutic level, such as Barthes' *punctum*. For example, the viewing of deceased ancestors may at one level elicit information about the person in the photograph (the prototype), their genealogy,

and familial connections, while, at another level, it may evoke a sense of loss and grief, joy, or calm, and/or a sensory experience. These photographs maintain essential relationships in the here-and-now, helping the person to adjust to dislocation, change and distance. This dislocation, change or distance may be geographical, due to migration, or metaphorical due to death or absence.

During this project, certain photographs overwhelmed the participants where no words could be spoken. Alongside silence, there were also physical responses including tears, and, at times, a discomfort that required the participant to move or turn. The participants often described these experiences as unpredictable and surprising, especially as when viewing these photographs on a daily basis, they did not react with such intensity. This suggests three possibilities; firstly, that there was something different in the interview situation in comparison to normal photographic viewing practices which created an overwhelming affective response; secondly, that putting words to the meaning of some photographs was inadequate to describe the phenomenon experienced; and thirdly, linked to the previous possibility, parts of the day-to-day interactions with these photographs occurs at an unconscious level. The latter suggestion would explain why the viewing of these images in an interview situation that requires verbal expression and cognition, of what is primarily an unconscious state, was surprisingly overwhelming and unpredictable for the participants. This experience reinforces what Weiser refers to as 'beneath the surface' of photographs (Weiser 1990). As the Bhana girls explained: *"There is a difference between looking at it and then talking about it. That is the part that makes you sad"* (Bhana girls).

Parents of Ramesh

The participants, Ramesh and Jyoti presented the above photograph at their first interview. Ramesh was born in New Zealand. His grandfather was one of the first Gujarati migrants to settle in Christchurch. His grandfather travelled from the village of Bodali, in the region of Navsari, to New Zealand in 1918. Ramesh has travelled back to Bodali on several occasions and on one of these occasions he met his wife Jyoti. Jyoti is from the nearby village of Avra Falia. Once married, Jyoti migrated to New Zealand and lived in Ramesh's family home with his parents. They have four daughters, all born in New Zealand, who are also participants in this study.

At the interview, this photograph was taken out of its frame, and then placed on the table. It was usually displayed on the living room wall in a central position, visible from the kitchen, lounge, and dining room, concurrently. The photograph depicts Ramesh's mother and father.

It is the only photograph and image on display in the living area. The presentation of this picture was highly affective. Both Ramesh and Jyoti became overwhelmed with emotion, finding it difficult to speak and becoming visibly distressed. In fact, there were remarkably few words spoken about this photograph. Ramesh was able to speak in a whispered voice, that this was a photo of his mum and dad, and *"they are looking down on us"* (Ramesh 2010).

All members of the family view this photograph everyday. It receives individual attention on auspicious occasions such as birthdays, anniversaries, and Hindu festivals and rituals. Both Ramesh and Jyoti place flowers on the frame to either mark an auspicious day, or when they feel like paying their parent's special attention. The viewing of this photograph on a daily basis, was also mentioned by the daughters of Ramesh and Jyoti, Hersha, Neela, Jayshree, and Jaya. They also feel the significance of the display of their ancestors in their home. This photograph has remained visible to them throughout their lives. They feel respectful towards it, and believe this photograph helps to keep the presence of their grandparent's in the home. They sometimes feel their grandparent's are there, through the photograph: *"It did not feel right when we were getting the renovations done, and it was put away. It was not there, and that was weird as well"* (Bhana girls, 2010). The significance of this photograph in the family home cannot be underestimated. To illustrate this point further, Jayshree (2010), remarked that one of the first things the family noticed after the earthquake on September 4th, 2010 in Christchurch, was that, *"it was still up there"*.

This photograph helps to maintain an active relationship between the family and their ancestors. If they did not have this photograph in their daily lives, their sense of well-being

and connectedness with their ancestors may not be as strong. The theme of ancestors and their significance in the social lives of my participants remains consistent throughout this project.

Prabha presented the following photograph of her Grandparents and sisters. Prahba's grandfather was one of the early Gujarati settlers in Dannevirke, in the North Island. Prabha's grandfather came out from India in the early 1900s; he too has a similar narrative and history that is unique to the Dannevirke area. Prabha's grandfather was also from the region of Navsari and the village Bhulia Falia/Matwad. Prahba married Kanti from Christchurch whose family originates from the nearby village of Karadi. They both met and married in New Zealand.

Prabha presented this photograph as one of two significant photographs. It is of her paternal grandparents and two sisters. For Prabha, acknowledging and interacting with her ancestors is part of her daily routine. This photograph acts as a conduit for these exchanges:

"First thing in the morning I open the blinds and say good morning to them…photos are good because I can actually look at them and talk to them individually. We need photos because when it is a special occasion we garland them. With photos it is better, we know we need to respect that one. If there is a happy or sad occasion here in Christchurch, someone will go and open up the house in India and garland their photos over there. Even though, the house is closed, everyone comes to the family home to pay their respects to them there" (Prabha 2010).

Prabha with grandparents and sisters.

Alongside the daily rituals, the physical/material presence of the photograph, in both the Christchurch home and village home, accesses and pays homage to ancestors at the same time. Chapter Three will explore in detail, the use of photographs in the inhabited and uninhabited village family home. The above photograph is unusual in reference to the

majority of ancestral photographs found in the participants' private archives. Most ancestral photographs presented, at this time, were studio portraits, whereas this photograph is informal and taken in the backyard of the family home. Of note, the grandfather is holding a movie camera in his right hand. The whereabouts of these movies is yet to be explored, but could contain some valuable, historical material for the family and community.

The following photograph presented by Bharty also demonstrates the significance of ancestral images as sites of important social interactions. Bharty was born in Christchurch. Her grandfather was one of the first Gujarati settlers, migrating from the village of Matwad, Navsari. Before migrating to Christchurch, Bharty's mother had four sons in the village of Matwad and then four more children once residing in Christchurch. Bharty has travelled back to the family home in Matwad as a child and adult; where she also met and married her husband from the village of Bodali. After her marriage she lived in Auckland, but returned later to Christchurch with her three children to be closer to family.

Bharty's mother and older brothers.

This photograph is very significant to Bharty: *"it is one of my prized possessions along with my mum's jewellery. They belonged to my mum. This photo brings back memories: I sometimes talk to this photo. When I want to talk to them I look at the photo I believe in reincarnation so I feel they are always here".*

When Bharty presented this photograph to me, she became quiet, and found it difficult to talk. She held the photograph in both hands and looked at it silently for some time. She stated that it was hard to say why it was so special and became teary and emotional. This photograph was made in India before her mother and four older brothers migrated to New Zealand. The photograph evoked strong and fond memories of her mother and older brothers, especially her brother Arvind who is now deceased. This photograph is displayed in the front entrance and can be seen as soon as you enter through the front door. It performs in both public and private realms within the home; the public realm of family and visitors, and the private realm of Bharty's silent and hidden thoughts and feelings. 'On the surface' it speaks to Bharty's family and migrant history. It records her mother's and brothers' Gujarat origins and pre-migration circumstances. It displays the formal studio portrait conventions of the time and provides a record of dress codes. On the other hand, 'below the surface' of the image, we feel the intense emotions and interactions that Bharty experiences when she views this image.

Manjula, Ashok's mother, further commented on the viewing practices of ancestral photographs, she claimed that when she looks at her photographs of deceased family and ancestors, she believes that they are there: *"Yes they are there, I sometimes talk to them, and I get mad at them sometimes. It is easier if you have the photos…"* (Manjula 2010).

Photographs of ancestors are also included at festive events such as weddings and important birthdays. According to the participants, the use of photographs have been adapted to, and incorporated into, wedding rituals. Traditionally, at Gujarati weddings, ritualistic songs were

sung and symbolic drawings were made on the walls of the house, inviting ancestors to be present at the wedding. These days, alongside the songs and symbolic drawings of ancestors (now done on paper to protect the painted walls), photographs are placed at the entrance of the ceremony: *"they are placed at the entranceway just to say we are thinking of them. We do not have to do that…it just lets people know we are thinking of them and that they are there with us"* (Prabha 2010). Bharty recalled, *"When my nephew got married there was a photo of my mum and dad. There is a ceremony which invites the ancestors who have passed away to come to the wedding"*(2010*).*

Parvati and Amrut, visiting father's grave at Sydenham cemetery.

The above photograph was a wedding photograph presented to me by Parvati. It exemplifies the significant role ancestral photographs have adopted in Gujarati wedding practices. Parvati was born in New Zealand, and her father was born in Gujarat, in the village of Karadi. He travelled to New Zealand to help his father in the family business. He returned to Karadi to find a wife and after he married Parvati's mother in 1947, she later returned with him to Christchurch to live. Parvati has two brothers and one sister. She also returned to her village home in Navsari and met Amrut who originates from the village of Karaka. They married in Christchurch.

This photograph, taken by Parvati's brother, records her and Amrut's visit to her father's grave. The visit to her father's grave was significant, inviting him to be present at their wedding. The significance of this act is recorded by the photograph itself. It marks an important pre-wedding ritual that has adjusted to the New Zealand context: *"That's my father's grave. In Indian custom for anything that you do, like a wedding, we worship Ganesh, and we also call our forefathers and mothers… we have special ceremonies for them, for the whole family. It is very significant because if you have forgotten someone, things can go wrong in the ceremony. Before the wedding, you start off by calling them…you should always remember your ancestors first"* (Amrut and Parvati, 2010). The role of ancestral photographs in Gujarati wedding rituals has been unexplored. They have been immersed into the Indian wedding ritual and have become embodied, devotional objects in this context. Ancestors are remembered and revered through the photograph, otherwise disagreeable things will happen. Photographs are now used as an integral part of wedding rituals, reinforcing their significant social agency. The following photographs further

reinforce the ability of photographs to fill in for absences by performing surrogate relationships in present and future terms.

Bharty's paternal grandmother in the village home, India.

The above photograph is Bharty's only photograph of her paternal grandmother. Her grandmother never left India. It was taken by a family member while on a visit to the village in Navsari. 'On the surface', this photograph is treasured as a privileged object because of its rarity and unique and engaging pose. It also speaks of the transition from formal studio photography to vernacular. This image is unusual, taken with a home camera, probably brought from New Zealand. The image is also unlike the studio portraits of that time, where the casual, outdoor setting, and expressive face contrasts with the standard studio portraits, which were serious and formal, and set in studios with artificial lighting and backdrops (as

seen previously). This photograph depicts the differences between the two photographic settings and the shifting influences on vernacular photography over time, from one context to another.

'Below the surface' of this image is Bharty's personal interaction and the emotional engagement she has with her grandmother. Although she knew her grandmother only, while on a six month visit to the village home when she was five, it helps to maintain and keep alive this relationship in the here-and-now. The following presentation of Bharty's maternal grandmother further exemplifies this phenomenon.

Bharty's maternal grandmother post-death.

Bharty and her daughter Jayna presented the above photograph at separate interviews. For Bharty, it is highly significant because it is a rare and special photograph of her maternal grandmother. Its treasured value has passed on from generation to generation. This photograph was also significant to Bharty's mother and was always displayed in a frame on her bedroom wall: *"That was the only photo my mum ever had and she cherished it so much. So when my mum passed away, I took it to keep it safe, I do not know who after me is going to keep it, but someone's got to keep it. I never met her."* Bharty grew up with this photograph knowing how special it was to her mother. This photograph is now significant to Bharty, for the very same reasons, though she does not display it in her bedroom. Instead, she has a photo of her own mother next to her bed. At the time that Bharty presented this photo she began to cry, *" I think they are my most precious photos…when I took them out to show you, I was not crying then".*

Jayna, on the other hand, presented this photograph, as one of her most significant photographs, because of the effect it had upon her as a child. She remembers going into her grandmother's room and seeing a large frame with many different photographs inside. All the photographs were of her grandchildren as babies. This photograph of Jayna's great grandmother (deceased) was amongst them. For Jayna, the photograph both intrigued and disturbed her. She felt scared of it when she was young, but now it has taken on a greater significance, as it reminds her of her childhood, her grandmother, and the value she placed on this image. Bharty and Jayna both reflected on how vital it is to protect the future of this image.

Although Bharty's grandparents have been absent from her life due to distance and death, she has developed significant personal and affective relationships with them through these images. These relationships with old photographs resemble Gell's notion of how object agency disperses over time and, in this instance, the agency of the photograph creates and reinforces a relationship between the viewer and the prototype (person)(1998:222). In essence, they have met and established a relationship through the photograph.

Parvati presented the following photograph as her most significant image. Like most participant presentations, it was the first photograph presented at the interview. Parvati claimed to '*love*' this photograph. It was taken after the wedding of her parents in 1947, in a studio in Navsari. It is frequently viewed by Parvati in her home and is displayed in a large frame. This photograph is significant because it is of her parents/ancestors who have now passed on. It is also significant because of the sensations it evokes, the colours it creates in Parvati's mind, and the memories and visions of her mother that she still experiences. While Parvati was describing this photograph, she was holding the silver framed image in both hands, and often touched and caressed parts of the image while she was talking. After she had finished talking about this photograph, it remained standing up and facing us throughout the interview. The following transcript exemplifies the potential level of elicited information that photographs can mediate. The information gathered is described in a layered, rather than linear approach, where the top layer 'on the surface', or as Barthes would describe the *studium* of the photograph, is presented at the same time that 'below the surface' affective responses, representing the *punctum* of the photograph, are experienced.

Parent's of Parvati

"This is a photo of my parents after they got married in 1947. This photo was taken just after the wedding in India. This photo interests me because of the sari my mother was wearing. If it was a colour print, we would see the colours. She was just a new bride. Dad was dressed like a gentleman, after living in New Zealand for ten years. It is quite nice. The tiles they have in India are very vibrant from what I have seen, like blue Chinese china. The colours are quite deep, like the colours of India. I look at my mother's face, she is so serious! She was only 18. It also fascinates me that she was with the fashion of the time; they wore sari blouses, the

short sleeve, a puff and a bit of gathering at the top. She kept up with the fashion. The print in her sari is quite prominent. It must have been a light coloured sari with red patterns. It is flat. I do not think it would be shiny, it might be silk. She is wearing an armlet, can you see that? That was the trend at the time, and gold bangles and a necklace. When your daughter gets married, the parents and husband give jewellery to the bride. Right from when the daughter is born, parents make provisions; they start saving for the wedding. One day, their daughter will be married, and you can not send her without anything. Even clothes, her saris, they would be thinking of. Back then, when the mothers received anything new, they would keep it for their daughters. I think there was a ten year gap between my mum and dad; he was 28. He was already here in New Zealand, and had gone back to India to get married. He came to New Zealand when he was about 17, with my grandfather, or my grandfather called him out here. Dad has got his watch on and is dressed in a pinstriped suit. I do not know what the fashion was then, in the late forties! Mum had her bindi there; that is significant for a women when she is married. I like that photo. It is my parents; they are responsible for bringing me into the world. Mum looks so serious! I think that was in the European studio portraits too, the very serious look. Sometimes I feel that they are around. I might be cooking in the kitchen, and I think my mother is there. My dad died about 41 years ago, but my mum died 13 years ago. Sometimes I think she is there. I often think of her although my mother has never been in this house, because we bought it only 6 years ago. When I was at the other house, she would visit quite frequently. She lived on the next street and would walk over to see my son. I can picture her, walking down the drive, and I am hanging out the washing, as she walks around the back. I see her in her old oatmeal coloured coat and a head scarf. She would come around and bring my son some grapes, biscuits and apples. She would come Saturday

mornings, but would not stop for long, she would just want to come and see us, and then walk back again. She lived on her own and just needed to see us, even though I talked to her on the phone every day. Mum and Dad came back to New Zealand together after they got married. They stayed in the village for well over a year before coming back to NZ. They brought my brother with them. I love that photo. I am thinking that I should get it enlarged. Maybe I should just get a bigger frame! It is gorgeous; I hope my son looks after it. The older they get, the more precious. I hope he keeps all of these photos."

This transcript can be described as highly textural and sensual while at the same time informative and detailed. Parvati's description of this photograph evokes corporeal sensations and emotions while at the same time providing an indexical description of 'the surface' of the image. The photograph elicits memories and experiences, some real, some imagined; historical knowledge and culturally relevant details about dress, customs, wedding arrangements; and photographic practices of that time. The textual sensations experienced throughout this description, the presence of colour even though it is black and white, and the reliving of visual experiences, attests to the importance of 'the visual' in storing and evoking affective responses and memories. It is as if there are two layers operating while viewing the photograph: the indexical, 'surface layer' and the 'below the surface' experiential affective layer.

The complex nature of this photograph and many of the images presented throughout this thesis suggest that photographs are essential objects for many different reasons. Given the highly affective qualities of these images and their ability to maintain significant personal

relationships with ancestors, I suggest that one of the essential roles of photographs in this community, and for its individuals, is a form of emotional connectivity. Photographs assist with a general sense of emotional well-being by enabling active relationships with ancestors, particularly in the context of migration, dislocation, or physical absence.

The high degree of affective response and the extraordinary status of ancestral photographs in this project suggest that the agency of these images is central to social relationships within this research group. It is therefore worth considering the potential for vernacular photographs to provide some form of therapeutic agency in the everyday lives of people, and whether this becomes more relevant in migrant and transnational circumstances.

When something is therapeutic, it is described as having a positive effect on the body or mind, contributing to a sense of well-being (Oxford Dictionary). Therapeutic agency in this thesis, refers to the ability of vernacular photographs to contribute to a sense of well-being, especially where people have experienced personal, cultural, familial, and geographical dislocation. As discussed in the introduction, photographs have often been described in the literature as ‘transitional objects'. This thesis suggests that not only do some photographs carry significant relationships from one point to another, they also on a day to day basis provide therapeutic agency for their viewers. Given the significance of the photographs presented in this thesis and the intricate relationships they have with their viewers and caretakers, it makes sense to claim that vernacular photographs have the ability to enhance or maintain a person’s sense of well-being.

To consider the therapeutic agency of the photographs presented, it is necessary to distinguish between photographs that are used ‘in therapy’ with those used in peoples day-to-day lives. Photographs used ‘in therapy’ (photo-therapy) are used as a way to access insight and create change. They are often problem-orientated and used, as a tool, to seek personal growth and understanding (Weiser 2001). This thesis refers to therapeutic agency as something that is not problem-orientated, but rather assists the viewer in some other way. With regards to the participants in this study, we have already witnessed the importance of maintaining connections with ancestors. Therefore, these photographs are performing therapeutic agency by assisting with the ongoing interactions of these vital relationships. and ultimately the participant’s sense of well-being. The following images and participant responses will further exemplify how photographs can play a therapeutic role in the day to day lives of their viewers.

Jayna at the beach with her father.

Jayna presented the above photograph. She had searched for this photograph and found it inside a box of images. It was not often seen, but was often thought about. Once Jayna had found this photograph, she became markedly silent and began to cry. It was difficult to talk about and highly affective. In comparison to Jayna's presentation of other photographs, there was an intense quiet surrounding this image. The image shows Jayna as a young child at the beach with her father. For Jayna, this photograph has strong, positive, and sad emotions embedded within it. While viewing it, she recalls and relives her relationship with her father as a child. The photograph helps Jayna to cement the experiences of the past into the present, by keeping alive those feelings and memories. This photograph, was, and still is, important to Jayna's sense of self and well-being. It helps to keep her positive experiences of their relationship alive even when there is geographical and personal dislocation. In other words, as Parkin (1999:318) comments: "In times of dispersal (migration) private mementoes may take the place of interpersonal relations as a depository of sentiment and cultural knowledge." In this instance, Jayna's photograph is a depository of personal sentiment.

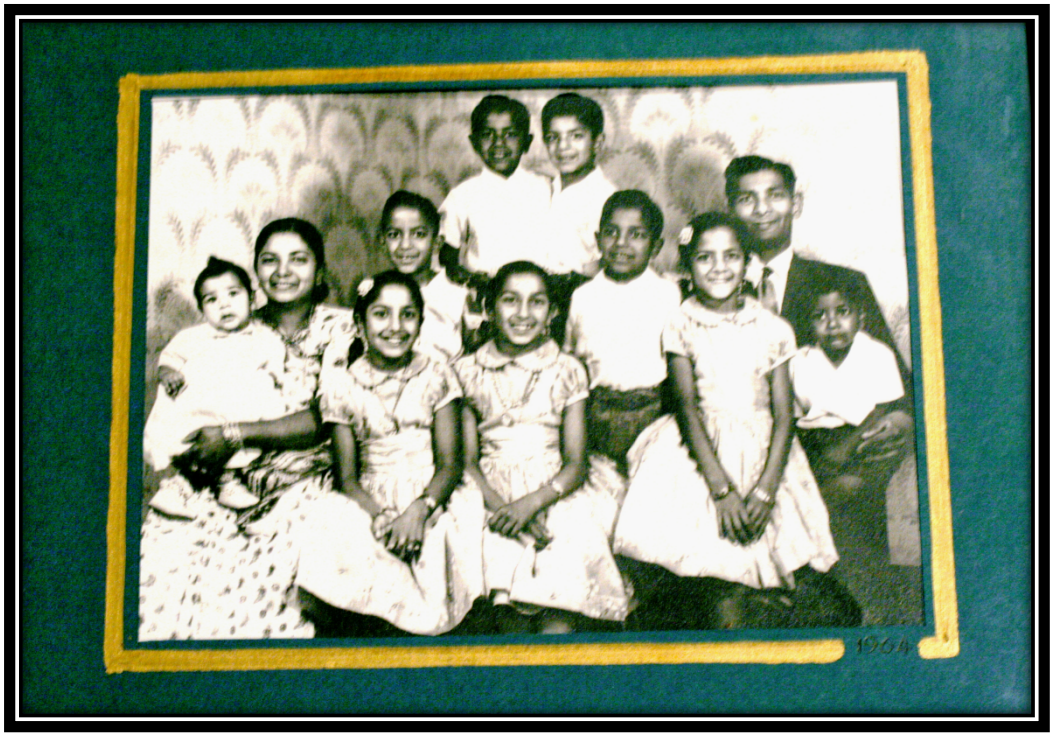
The following photograph touches on the ability of photographs to deal with absence and presence at the same time. Bharty presented this photograph to me as one of her many significant photographs. It was in a personal photo album, made especially for her 50th birthday. 'On the surface', this photograph reminds Bharty of a memorable family event and marks the importance of family and her siblings, including her deceased brother. 'Below the surface', Bharty believes the light shining in the back row is her brother Arvind. *"I like this photo because it was taken at my brother's 50th... That is my oldest brother Ray, and then Arvind who passed away, but see the light there, I reckon that is him, I really do"* (Bharty, 2010). This photograph speaks directly to Bharty's Hindu belief system and articulates for

Bharty that her ancestors are always present. This photograph helps cement Bharty's sense of connection with her family and reassures her of her brother's presence, while at the same time acknowledging his absence in a physical sense.

Bharty and 'all' her brothers and sisters.

The next photograph and following transcript help to further substantiate the claim that photographs mirror the social lives of people and help to mediate their experiences. Prabha introduced this photograph as her most significant photograph and it was, remarkably, one of only two photographs presented throughout our contact. Prabha believes that this photograph represents all things important to her. *"When I was thirteen we all went to India and that is when this photo was taken. It was taken before we went, the whole lot of us. My Grandfather wanted one taken; it is set in the home, not a studio"* (Prabha, 2010)

It is a window into her world and all that matters to her. Prabha has many photographs displayed in the living room, on the walls and in frames on the dresser. There is also a large collage on the wall made up of photographs of all her family and social networks. That Prabha chose to present this one photograph makes it all the more significant. I will present this photograph again, at relevant points, for discussion.



Prabha and family, Dannevirke NZ.

This image reflects the importance of familial connections in Prabha's day-to-day life. On a daily basis, this photograph reinforces a sense of family and belonging. It serves to remind Prabha about the lives of her parents. It evokes an appreciation for the struggles her parents experienced and their remarkable achievements. It contains her experiences of the trip to India and the stories she wishes to pass onto her children. Utimately, for Prahba this image

plays a significant role in maintaining a sense of well-being through its affective agency. The following is an excerpt from Prahba's transcript:

When I look at this photo I think about my mother, I think about me bringing up two children, and she was bringing up all of us. We came one after another, but we were all born in the same house. I think about the large amount of work she had to do, I think about that all the time, continuous, every day, I think about it.

I remember the story of when my grandfather first came out, all the men folk were living in one little house, and from there they branched out everywhere. They had no heating, no Indian food, that they were used to, no spices or anything like that, they saved what little they brought, not knowing what was out here. I think of the amount of work they would do from morning to nigh, and the harsh winters. All they had was a bin with paper mostly, not wood. They use to sit around there, and they would cook what they could find. It was amazing. Then my grandmother came out and things got a bit easier for my grandfather, although the house started filling out then. That is when all the uncles started coming out to New Zealand. I think about that and about how they did that?

They had no home comforts here at all. At least there, in India, they may not have had material things, but they had the home, the food, the people to cook for them, the family life, whilst they left all that to come here. They had nothing. They knew no one, so they essentially started right from scratch. We had this great big house, and it had about seven huge rooms. Three of the rooms would be about this big. None of my brothers and sisters was around at

that time; it was just me, my grandparents, my two aunties, and an uncle. We had another five uncles (friends of the family) staying with us in those days. My grandfather use to call them out from India, and help them to settle down here.

When I look at this photo, all these things come back; I think they are pretty special. Even just looking at that shot I think about the home, the big house that we had, and the fun we had as kids; growing up, and rolling down the hills.(Pointing to the photo) That is why I think of this all the time, there is just so much history. I tell my kids about it, both of them know everything I have told you, because I talk about it so often, and think about it so often. I have lots of other photos, every one has a story behind it, but this one brings out so much more than just a moment (Prabha, 2010).

This photograph touched on various aspects of Prabha's life and of the lives of those around her. She describes the importance of her ancestors; their migration and struggles; the importance of her family; the trip back to India; the changes to the family home as new people arrived from the homeland; childhood memories; appreciation for parents and the importance of passing this information on to her own children. Interwoven throughout Prabha's photograph are memories, history, visions, sensations, knowledge, appreciation; joy; sadness; and a sense of continuity and connectivity. Sometimes this information is factual and informative, while at other times, it is affective and experiential. This one photograph evoked much information, reasserting the argument that photographs are effective mediators of social worlds.

I chose to single out these photographs as significant privileged objects due to their high degree of affective agency. The consistent prototype of these photographs were ancestors. This demonstrates that ancestors still play a central role in the social lives of this community. Photographs have the ability to maintain a direct connection with ancestors, and in doing so, assist participants to have an ongoing sense of spiritual and emotional connectivity. From these photographs, and the information elicited, I make the claim that ancestors, although deceased, are still central in the social lives of participants in this project and other Gujarati migrant groups around the globe. Therefore, I propose that to understand the social lives of Gujarati people, ancestors must always be included in their ethnography. I also propose, that there is a correlation between the high level of affective agency in these photographs and their role as transitional objects. They enact a form of therapeutic agency for those that view and treasure them, on a day-to-day basis. By keeping those that are absent, present in a transformed state, through the photograph, the participants can maintain their emotional connections and relationships over time and distance. The following chapter will look more closely at how vernacular photographs perform as transitional objects over both time and distance.

Photomontage B

Chapter Three:

Photographs and The Chakra Wheel: Adaptive, Transitional Objects

One way photographs assist social relationships lies in their ability to 'stand in for' and 'make present' relationships that are absent. With this in mind, it is necessary to consider the potential of photographs to perform as transitional objects at times of upheaval and change. Throughout this thesis, I use the Chakra Wheel to provide a symbolic framework for understanding the transnational circumstances of this Gujarati/New Zealand community group. The Chakra Wheel implies a continual movement around the hub and along the spokes, to and from the centre, to the outer rim. This framework allows for a conceptualisation of migrant studies that include multiple locations and networks at the same time. It assumes that the relevant contexts of migrant communities are multiple and always shifting. As already claimed, vernacular photographs both mirror and are active in the social lives of their custodians and, in the migrant context, they play vital roles in keeping social relationships alive over time and distance. This chapter will discuss the importance of the village home for the participants in this project, as found presented through their photographs. These photographs will show the significance of the journey and ongoing connections to the village home, and how photographs themselves have become essential objects within this process. I argue that photographs have become adaptive transitional objects embedded within Chakra wheel migrant networks.

Gibson (2004) recognizes that material objects have the ability to be transformed in ways which are contrary to their assumed objective. Gibson's research, on the use of photographs and other objects as transitional objects in the process of mourning, found that photographs were a way of reclaiming and rehousing the remains of a life now gone (2004:297). To help explain this phenomenon Mehta and Belk (1991), Edwards (1997), Parkin (1999) and Gibson (2004), make links with Winnicott's (1986) psychological concept of the 'transitional object', where objects such as photographs act like a 'security blanket'. Like a baby's security blanket, the photograph becomes embedded with significant emotional attachments, allowing for the transition from homeland to new land, or, as in Winnicott's theory of the transitional object, the baby transitions developmentally, from maternal attachment to individuation (1986). The photographs presented in this thesis, aid in the process of dislocation and resettlement by performing as transitional objects, embedded with significant emotional attachments.

Indian migrant research, such as Mehta and Belk (1991) found that certain objects in Indian migrant homes have greater value due to migratory processes. Photographs were one of those objects. The photograph as a 'transitional object' may sustain the migrant through the necessary changes to his/her environment, by 'standing in for' significant personal and social attachments such as kinship ties, locality and geography, familiar places and spaces, rituals, religious practices, interpersonal relationships, icons, sensual experiences, and connections with ancestors.

This research makes links with the concept of the transitional object, and witnesses how photographs interact in this way. As mentioned earlier, it extends the idea of photographs standing in for that which is absent and asserts that photographs can also keep present ongoing relationships in the here-and-now. In the case of my research participants, photographs have indeed operated like transitional objects, but instead of diminishing over time as Parkin (1999) suggests, they have remained a 'security blanket', by continuing a spiritual, physical and symbolic presence for the participants, in both their New Zealand homes and village homes. For example, Gujarati families send photographs to their village home, where they are displayed on the wall, even when no one resides in the home anymore. Photographs are acknowledged and included in auspicious occasions such as religious festivals, birthdays, and funerals. They have been adapted to deal with family members migrating away from the family home. At the same time, they embody the person in the here-and-now, in the home and village. These photographs are highly valued and are at times given greater status, particularly when the subject of the photograph is deceased. Sometimes, they remain as the only valued object within the uninhabited home. Photographs have become entrenched within this migratory process; they follow the journeys of their caretakers, and maintain essential connections between the new home and the ancestral home. Likewise, within Gujarati/ Christchurch homes, photographs of ancestors and family have a privileged status, ensuring cultural and familial presence and continuity.

Previous photographic research discovered that photographs help people and communities adapt to social changes and distance. These studies support this research by recognising the powerful, emotive force of the vernacular photographic image. Smith and Vokes (2008)

discuss how various studies of photography in different cultural contexts have found the photograph to effect a powerful emotive force that affects the social world in significant ways. They refer to the photograph's 'inherent interdeterminancy'; the ability of the image to present both the experience of presence and absence at the same time (2008:284). They suggest that it is this unsettling relationship which gives the photograph its affective force.

Lozada (2006) found that photographs in rural communities in China, are used to express kinship and community identity. He refers to Appadurai's 'experiments of self-making' and claims that photographs are physical embodiments and documentations of the self-represented work of the imagination. Through the display and viewing of family photographs, the deterritorialised family was able to remain connected virtually.

Tolia-Kelley (2004) agrees that objects such as photographs give meaning and value beyond their textual content. Her research focused on the role of visual culture in understanding the value of the landscape to post-colonial migrants living in Britain. She found that visual materials refract a multisensory connection with homeland, creating a textual landscape-of-belonging in the home, and helping to create a place of settlement and roots. The display of these images connected individuals to people and landscapes in ways which inform a sense of self (Tolia-Kelly 2004:67). The above studies support this research by reinforcing the key role photographs have within shifting communities. Photographs adjust to specific cultural contexts and maintain social connectivity for people experiencing a sense of dislocation, due to migration, death, or emotional distance.

Photographs mirror the circulatory experiences of migration reflecting the journeys and relationships between homeland and new land. The circulatory nature of photographs in migrant settings has been, so far, insufficiently studied. Diedre McKay's (2008) research of the Haliap migrant community in Hong Kong, helps to address this lack by following the circulation of photographs in both the migrant, and village home contexts. She found that, in this instance, photographs not only retained the past, but were also deployed to bring into being, desired future selves. McKay's research demonstrates how the photograph is fundamental to translocal subjectivities. She found that images can represent social relations, as well as social status, and future worth. These photographs perform as distributed objects in the process of migration as well as acts of self making in this context. Importantly, McKay's research addresses the phenomenon of globalisation and cultural flows by following the translocal movement of these images, studying their reception and distribution in both the homes of Hong Kong migrants, and then the reception of these images in the homes of their Filipino village. She found that, for migrants, these photographs generate distinct subjectivities based on emotions, fears, and hopes for the future (McKay 2008:391). This study, addresses a central theme found within this thesis: the exchange and movement of visual images in transnational settings actively maintains present, past, and future social relationships. Therefore, vernacular photographs found in migrant settings mirror the fluid and dynamic processes experienced by the people themselves. The photographs found in this thesis help to mediate these processes and experiences.

The materiality of photographs and their ability to be copied, exchanged, and travel, enhances their value as transitional objects. As Edwards (2002) claims, the materiality of photographs

is central to their ability to move from place to place. The photographs presented in this research were predominantly printed images on paper, with the exception of some digital photographs. They were displayed in the home: in frames, on the walls, on the mantelpiece, or carefully stored in family albums and boxes. They were small in size and could be easily posted or taken in person back to the village home. It is the tangibility of the photographic image that allows for it to shift from one context to another, and consequently from one function to another. In other words, the social agency of the photographic image is reliant on its tangibility and ability to be circulated. We can therefore make the claim, as does Lisle (2009), that images, particularly in the migrant and transnational context, are not static objects. The following photographs below form a group of images that highlight the significance of the family home, back in India. They model the Chakra Wheel by keeping at the centre of the wheel, the family home, their point of origin.

Photographs and the Family Home

When people ask me, have I been to India? I say I have a house there. As far as I am concerned we have a one eighth share in a family home. That's great. We are landowners, that is where we come from (Ashok 2010).

One of the most repetitive themes of photographs presented in this project is the photograph of the 'family home'. Here, the family home refers to the home of their ancestors back in their Gujarati village. These photographs were presented to me as significant images, because of their ability to tie participants directly to their place of origin, to their family land, and to their family heritage. Without these photographs, some participants claimed to fear a sense of loss

and connection with their identity. These photographs represented more than proof of their family links to the village; they helped keep participants relationship with their family home and village socially active in the present. As time, distance, and travel costs have inhibited the ability of the participants to visit their family home, in Gujarat, on a regular basis, some photographs have become both icons of their village heritage and have made the journeys for them.

It has always been a considerable undertaking to return home to 'the motherland.' Most participants in this research have visited their family home, in Gujarat, on two or three occasions in their life time. The long distances and great expense, especially when the only option was sea travel, made travel back to India a rare, but highly significant event. In the past, families would travel back to the village, and stay for a period of time ranging from a few months to several years. This experience immersed them into village life, established connections with family and the family home, and strengthened their language and understandings of cultural practices. Ultimately, these trips helped the participants gain an understanding of where they and their ancestors came from, and cemented their links with their point of origin, even when they were New Zealand-born. The photographs below attest to the significance of this event for the community.

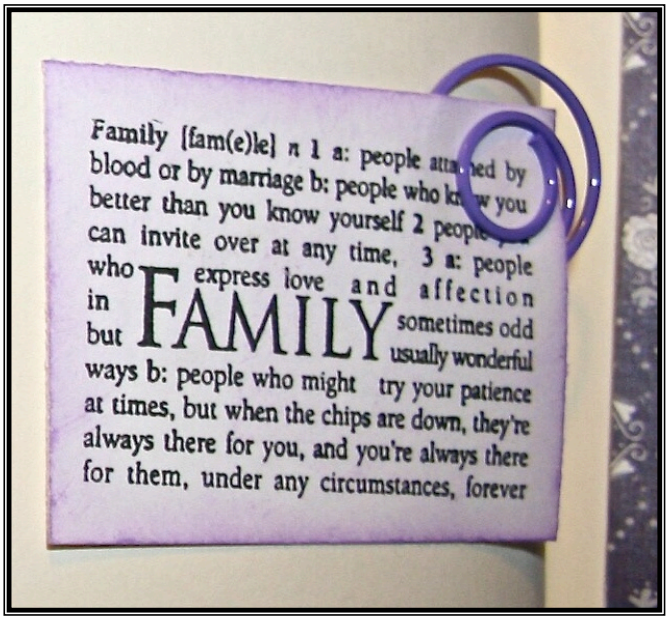
The Gujarati community bid farewell to the Bhana family on their trip back to India – the men.

The Gujarati community bid farewell to the Bhana family on their trip back to India – the women.

As a child, Ramesh and his family returned to India for several months, where he vividly remembers the experience of village life. The significance of this event to the Bhana family and the whole Gujarati/Christchurch community is presented in the above two images. Ramesh presented the above photographs at the onset of the first interview. They were taken when the Bhana family were leaving for India, and the whole community came out to see them off. Ramesh likes these photos because *"they represent the community, as it was in those days"*. The photograph tells the story of the journey made back to India by the Bhana family, emphasising this experience as highly significant. These photographs also mirror the gendered structure of the community, with men and women photographed separately.

In contrast to Ramesh's ancestral photographs, these photographs were easy to talk about and would fit quite comfortably into Barthes' concept of *studium*, having a high level of community and cultural relevance. Their social agency cements Ramesh's connection with India and Christchurch at the same time, while also mirroring the mobile and integrated nature of the Gujarati families in Christchurch. These photographs underscore the shared experiences of these families. The trip back to India was significant, not only to the family leaving, but also to the community as a whole. Most of the participants while on their visits back home, have also visited the villages and homes of the other Christchurch Gujarati families.

Photo taken of Ganda family before trip back to India



Bharty presented the above upper photograph as one of many photographs presented to me at the first interview. This photograph also refers to the importance of the family trip back to her village home in Matwad. She states, *"This is one when we were going back to India, when I was five. See, I had a little doll with me, but I never brought it back because my cousins took it off me. I had to give it to my cousin's kids, because they did not have one"*. The photographer was Bharty's brother and is missing in the image, however, Bharty cut out another photo of him and pasted it on, so that he was also included. Bharty displayed this photograph in a photo album created for her 50th birthday. It is also surrounded by embellishments of colour and design, as well as relevant text. The social agency of this photograph serves to remind Bharty of her trip back to India, and the significance this had for her and the family. It keeps the memories of this trip and her family alive, and is an iconic image of the family and its experiences together. The nature of this photograph for Bharty was affective; she claimed to *'love`* this photograph because it reminded her of her trip back to India. She remembered the journey on board the ship; the experience of the village school, and the smells and tastes of various foods.

While this photograph stimulated memories and sensations of her trip back to the village home, it also acknowledged at the same time, the importance of this moment when the family was together as a group. Bharty considered this to be a rare and treasured occasion, especially given the large differences in siblings ages. Bharty's four older brothers were born in India, and the younger four, Bharty included, were born in New Zealand. The gap between older and younger siblings represents the family's shift from India to New Zealand. The card found next to the image, highlights the importance of family for Bharty.

The trip back to the family home still occurs in most of the families researched in this project. Due to chain migration, many family members are now living overseas and, consequently, there are fewer and fewer family members, if any, now residing in India. Relatives are dispersed around the globe in Britian, Canada, South Africa, and Australia. For some participants, there is no one left in the village for the family to visit. This situation concerns the older generation. They fear the younger generation will be less interested in returning to the family village, especially, when there are no relatives remaining. However, regardless of whether there are relatives resident in the home, the home/house/land remains, and, as a result, has become more of an icon for the absent family. The following photographs will demonstrate the importance of ongoing connections with the village home.

The family home has become an iconic image in the minds of the participants in this research. When participants presented these photos, they talked of their trips back to India and the experiences they had. The participants articulated a nostalgic and often detailed recount of these experiences. The family home, for most families in this project, still exists in both reality or the imagaination.

The upkeep of the village family home has become a complicated issue for these families. They comment, that a lot of time is spent renovating the family home when people return to the village, as Jyoti states, time is spent, *"getting the home back into a liveable state"*(2010). For Ramesh, "*Ninety percent of the trip is taken up renovating the home and then the house will be closed up for another four years or until another family member arrives in the village"*(2010). If these visits are rare, and infrequent, the family home may deteriorate to a

point when it will be uninhabitable, causing further social complications. It is expected that when husbands and wives return to the village they should stay in the paternal family home; as it is not customary to stay in the wife's maternal family home. Consequently, the family home is not just a symbol of belonging; it is also the space in which the family stays on their return to the 'motherland'. Jyoti commented that if no one goes back to the family home, *"it will stay there and just waste away"* (2010). The participants spoke of the obvious contrast between homes of migrant families living in close proximity to India, versus those further away. New Zealand Gujarati family homes can be identified because they are often, visibly, rundown. Regardless of the demise of these homes, they are still held in reality and the imagination as the centre pin of the family. Consequently, as time goes on, images of these homes have become more privileged and elevated.

Bharty's family home Matwad, Navsari, "The Front Door".

Bharty took this photograph of her family home when she visited her village, several years ago. It has travelled back to Bharty's home in Christchurch and performs a valuable role in anchoring Bharty's identity with the village of Matwad. This image is iconic for Bharty because it reminds her of her origins, and family connection to the land and house, back in the village. It affirms her identity as Gujarati. Remarkably, like many of the participants, even though Bharty was born in New Zealand, the ongoing presence of the family home in Matwad is essential to her sense of history, place, and self. No one lives in this home any more; the families have all migrated overseas. There is a caretaker in the village that occasionally checks on the house. The building itself is now so deteriorated that it is uninhabitable. However, its future is under discussion by family members: the question of replacing it with a new home is under review. Some family members insist on keeping a building on the site, and others are less concerned with its future. For Bharty, *"I do not care if it is falling down or whatever, it has got to stay there… it is your heritage. You just never know, somebody might just want to stay there."* Jayna (Bharty's daughter) also commented on this photograph, *"That's how families are defined. If someone askes me who I am, I am so and so's daughter from Bodali village"*(2010). Therefore, to belong to a village, you need to belong to a place; a place is a house or land.

For Bharty, this photograph evoked memories of the home, surrounding land and stories about past visits to the village. Bharty remembered the interior of the house and in particular the old wooden swing they used to sit on as children. She also remembered the exterior: the outdoor kitchen, water supply, and the surrounding land, with roaming peacocks. At times, it

had relevance as a window onto the past, and at other times, it encouraged a quiet reflection with emotional responses very much tied to the present.

The presentation of village home photographs also touched on the future of these significant spaces as sites of belonging. As fewer visits to the family home occur, photographs have taken on a more privileged role. They have become valued images that embody persons who are absent from the home, either by death or distance. Photographic conventions deal with these absences and the migrant circumstance, helping to keep their family anchored at their point of origin, mirroring the hub of the Chakra Wheel.

Inside the Ganda home, Matwad, Navsari.

The above photograph was presented to me by Ashok. Ashok was born in New Zealand and his father, one of Bharty's older brothers, was born in Matwad. His great grandfather was one of the first Gujarati settlers in Christchurch. Ashok has always lived in Christchurch and has on a few occasions visited his village home in Matwad. His mother, Manjula, was born in the village of Dandi and came to New Zealand after her marriage to Ashok's father (Arvind) in India.

Ashok presented this photograph as one of his most significant images. It exemplifies the viewing conventions of photographs within village family homes. It is a photograph of photographs, taken in the village home, in Matwad. It shows the inside of the Ganda family home, the same home as presented by Bharty previously. Ashok took this image when he last visited India, he states:

"I like this photo because it is inside the Ganda house in India. It has got mum and dad, some family photos of my grandparents, my uncles and aunties. They are still in our house, you would not live in that house, but the photos are still there, I love that, I think it is cool the sense of belonging. You want to know where you come from; you want to know your family and your heritage" (2010).

This photograph represents multiple relationships simultaneously. Firstly, this photograph keeps Ashok's links with his Indian family home and village. Secondly, it allows him to remember his experience of returning to the family home and, thirdly, it helps reinforce his connections with his father who is in several of the images. Remarkably, at the time of the

interview, the large photograph of Ashok's father, was also displayed in a prominent position, in the family home in Christchurch.

The photograph of Ashok's father (with scarf) has become a significant image. This photograph keeps Ashok's father present in the family home in Matwad and also makes links with Ashok, his father and their mutual involvement with the Christchurch Indian Sports Club. Ashok attempted to locate the original of the photograph of his father with 'the club' scarf, after presenting the above photograph to me. He had wanted to include it in a book documenting the history of the Indian Sports Club. However, Ashok's investigation for the photograph found that the images seen in this above photograph, have since been removed and 'gotten rid of' from the village home. Ashok does not know who removed them or why, but assumes that it was because they had deteriorated. His response to this finding was a sense of loss*: "I was very disappointed. I think it is a shame not to see the family photos up there. There was a photo there of my dad; it was an awesome photo. I really wanted it. It is a shame because you can not replace it".* This photograph has consequently become even more significant and privileged due to the changes occurring in the family home, in India. It is now the only tangible record of the images in the family home, and, possibly, of this image of Ashok's father.

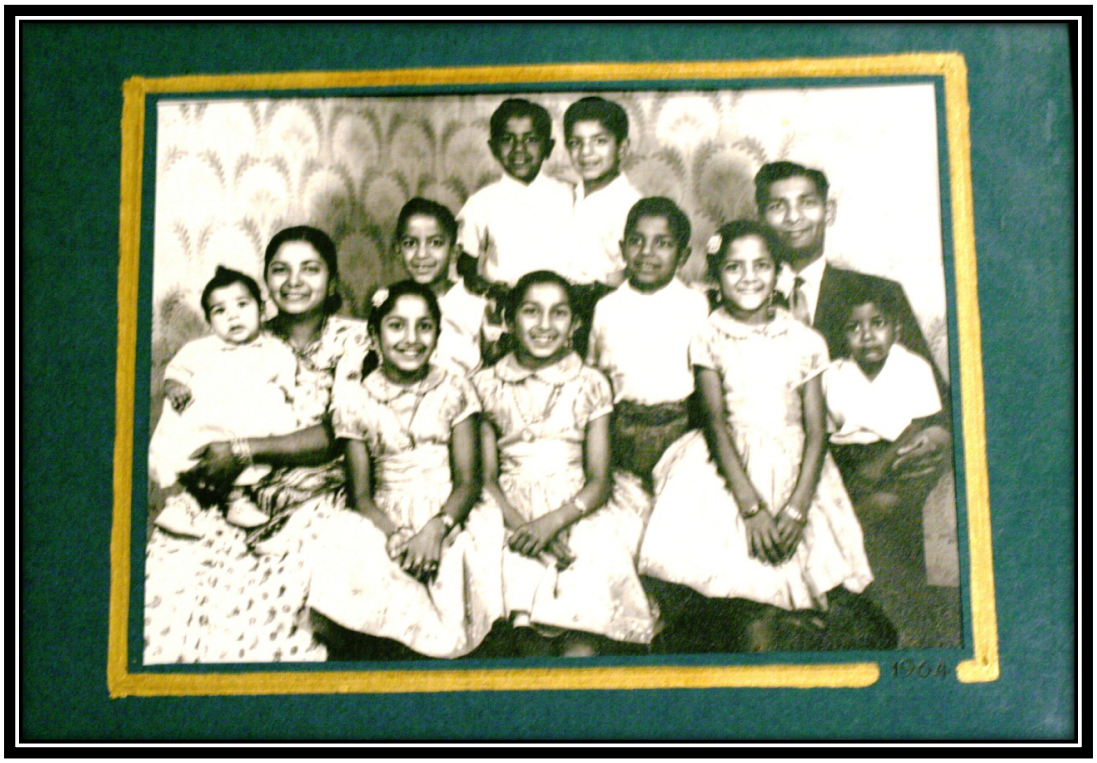
This photograph is evidence of the adaptations made to photographs when they transition into the Gujarati village context. The Hindu convention of placing garlands of flowers on the images as a sign of acknowledgment and devotion are apparent in this image. The Hindu ritual of placing a *tilak* on the forehead (small dot on his father's forehead) is seen on the

glass of the photograph. The ornate designs and embellished colours used in their framing, resemble Indian design and photographic conventions. Although these images were undoubtedly taken in Christchurch, they have adapted to this religious and cultural context. In other words, their social agency has transformed from a Christchurch context to the village context, in turn, influencing their surrounding environment and social setting, in new and different ways. Within the village home, these photographs keep present those that are absent, in both a spiritual and physical/material sense.

Ismail family home in the village of Adada, Navsari.

Raesha presented the above photograph of the Ismail family home in Adada, Navsari. As already mentioned in the preface, Raesha is a fourth generation, New Zealand-born, Gujarati. The two story house in the middle of the image is her family home back in the village of

Adada. She states: *"That is what I see as my connection to back home – I love it! Even for me, I think that home is so significant, even though I am fourth generation – that is our home over there!"* Raesha took this photograph when she visited her family home, fourteen years ago. She loves this photo of the home. She loves the building itself and what it represents for her. Even though, she has only stayed in it for short periods of time, she feels akin to it, *"I love these photos; I always feel a bit sad when I look at them. I have been back at age 3, 17 and 27. I have very strong memories; those trips were very important."* The photograph also provides a form of geographical mapping, a sense of bearing and place: where the home is on the street, what is next door, and its placement in reference to the Mosque across the road. Even though Raesha has never lived permanently in this house, it is without question regarded as home.



Prabha and Family, taken before family trip back to India.

Prabha also refers to the importance of the village family home in her presentation of photographs. Although the above image is not of the family home in India, it makes many links with this theme. The photograph includes all of Prabha's immediate family before their seven-month visit to the ancestral village home in Budhia Ferida, Matwad. Firstly, as already mentioned, the convention of taking a family photograph before the trip back to India, highlighted this event as particularly significant in the life of the family, as Prabha states, *"I know when this photo was taken, the struggle my dad had to get all the money together to take us on this amazing trip, eleven of us … it was a struggle. I remember quite vividly, about four months before we were going, tickets were being bought. It was a very stressful time, and my grandfather said he would help out but he could not because he had given away the money to help someone else. So yeah, all these little things, you remember them and think about them"* (Prabha 2010).

Secondly, this photo elicited Prabha's memory of her trip and experiences. She remembers the open streets, and the open doors of the houses, where people would come in and out, and kids ran around to anyones place. The village resembled one big family, where everyone knew everyone, and what was happening.

This photograph, also led to a discussion about the family home and the attachment Prabha has with it. Prabha spoke about a recent trip back to the village with her father, before he passed away, *"he was sick … we had an inkling that he would not live too long; he was only waiting so he could go to India… his one wish was to go home, to see his house, to say goodbye."*

On Prabha's last visit to the village home, she took with her copies of family photographs taken in New Zealand, creating a collage, similar to the one in her Christchurch home. She placed this collage in her ancestral home. Prahba stated, *"Everything here links back to the family home there, that is why I made collages to take to India. When I put them up, I felt really good, like everybody was there with me."* Now that Prabha is back in Christchurch, the collage back in the village home has changed how she feels, *" Its different. It feels like we are all there as well, a part of us is there. Even though I have moved out of my father's house, we are still part of that home"* (2010).

Photographs on display inside Bhana family home, Bodali, Navsari.

The Bhana family presented the above photograph after a discussion about the family home, in India. The Bhana girls, Jayshree and Jaya, took this photograph while on their most recent

visit back to their village, Bodali. Ramesh described the photographs in the family home as like *"a memorial, ...[it] usually included family members who have died. The photographs are sometimes surrounded by elaborate flowers and are massive in size. When there is a wedding, or such, you pay homage to those people, and you ask them for your blessing in the future"(2010).* Ramesh explains that some people make the photographs larger*, "as if having bigger photos makes the feelings that much more."* It was also suggested that enlarging images was a way of representing or elevating the status of the deceased person (Jyoti 2010).

These images and the participants responses to them, make apparent the essential role photographs play in weaving Gujarati people, their families, and community together with their ancestral home back in India. They exemplify the Chakra Wheel as a metaphor for how Gujarati migrant communities remain connected to the 'Motherland' of India, and the significance of maintaining this connection. Photographs appear to perform as anchor points for these connections in a tangible way. Their social agency makes people and relationships present in virtual and actual realities. They embody people and relationships in the here-and-now, in multiple sites and contexts.

Throughout this project, I have found photographs to be constantly mobile, performing vital connections between India and the migrant community. The use of photographs as a mode of exchange between the village home and the Christchurch home reinforced their direct links and social networks. The photographs in this chapter enact these significant relationships in a visual way. These images help to maintain their presence in the family home, even when families no longer live there. By residing in empty, closed houses, they ensure the continued

presence of the family members. At times, the most important photographs back in India and are, disturbingly, absent in New Zealand.

The photographs displayed within this chapter depict these vital relationships in several forms. The trip back home helps to maintain functional relationships such as taking care of the family home; reinforcing Gujarati language; and understanding specific cultural and religious practices. It also maintains social networks, such as, linking with extended family, introducing potential marriage partners, and remaining a part of the village social structure. Finally, the trip back home, by either family or their photographs, maintains affective relationships with the homeland. These affective relationships can be experienced as both emotional or sensory.

This chapter has depicted the circular journey of photographs mirroring the circular journey of the participants themselves. When the participants cannot perform the trip to India, their photographs go on the journey for them, and become permanently resident in the ancestral home. These photographs and the complex relationships the participants have with them, reinforce the vital links that exist for this group with their 'homeland'. The photographs visually support and acknowledge the importance of an ongoing connectivity and maintenance of relationships between the people, the home and the village left behind. For these participants, the photographs presented in this project thread both Christchurch and 'homeland' together, enabling the community to shape a transnational sense of identity and belonging. These photographs through their adaptability and mobility act as transitional

objects securing and maintaining vital relationships between the village home and the Christchurch home at the same time.

Photomontage C

Chapter Four:

Photographs Creating and Maintaining Community

The previous chapter discussed the importance of the 'motherland' in the social lives of the participants. With this firmly set within the framework of this analysis, an exploration of the participants social world, in the New Zealand context, can now be undertaken. The photographs presented illustrate the development of the Christchurch Gujarati community as another significant theme in this research project. As mentioned previously, this community group has lived in a relatively isolated way from other Indian migrant communities in New Zealand. Their numbers were significantly small for many decades, and resulted in a close, if not tightly bounded, group, linked together by former familial, and community experiences. In this chapter l argue that photographs have played a prominent role in creating community, by both documenting history, and reinforcing, visually, a sense of place and belonging in the New Zealand migrant context. Firstly, I suggest that photographs have helped create and maintain community identity by assisting traditional (oral and verbal) village knowledge systems, through visual means. Secondly, I demonstrate how the photographs themselves, give clues to how this group adjusted to the New Zealand context, while at the same time, remaining firmly attached to their Gujarati origins. This chapter will examine, in greater detail, how the photographs presented by participants help to keep knowledge traditions alive, and establish a sense of place and belonging in Christchurch New Zealand.

From my involvement in this project, it became apparent that to know one's lineage and kinship system was essential to Gujarati/New Zealand life. Throughout this project, the importance of knowing people and kinship links was a recurring theme. The participants' photographs both mirrored and articulated these connections in a visual way. From my observations, I argue that photographs have adapted to the migrant situation by substituting traditional aural knowledge systems, found in the village setting, with visual photographic archives. In other words, photographs support and recreate the village social network, in migrant settings.

Once families move away from the village context, the traditional forms of knowing who people are and where they relate, changes. In the village context, aural traditions of knowing one's family are being constantly reinforced through daily communication and interaction. In the migrant setting, people are no longer living in such proximity to each other, they are no longer speaking to each other every day over cups of tea, or discussing day-to-day matters from the verandah or across a game of cards. In this project, and in the migrant situation, photographs appear to help keep this form of information and communication active in a visual way. Though the families may be disconnected from day-to-day interactions and communications, the photographs act as a surrogate, for this powerful communicative space, particularly for the older generation. Throughout this project, it was common for the participants to start listing their relatives and lineage when they looked at their photographs. Photographs have become essential objects that present and strengthen these links, helping to keep the New Zealand village and community connections in tact. As Prahba (2010) states:

I think photographs are important because quite often people do not know you are related. Even though there are a lot of us (Indians), we have many ties: it is important that people know the big picture of who they are. We know everybody. It goes back so far. That is when photographs come into it. They all link up somehow.

As already highlighted, the historical narrative, and discourse of this Gujarati group in Christchurch reveals a strong bond between these families. Their photographs represent, in a visual way, how this group developed a strong sense of attachment. Their photographs, explore and display their interrelationships. Some photographs have become iconic representations of these relationships. After reviewing these photographs and the participants' responses, I suggest that this group has reinvented itself in its own Christchurch 'village' format, and that photographs both mirror and symbolise this construction. The following photographs will attest to how photographs have cemented events, experiences, and relationships within the Christchurch Gujarati community.

Ashok presented the following image as one of his most significant photographs. It was displayed on the lounge room wall and has been on display there for many years. *"It has been around ever since I can remember"* (Ashok 2010). Ashok *'loves'* this photo. It was taken before Ashok was born, yet it represents for him both his family and community, at the same time:

Photograph of Christchurch Indian Association and the community with Indian Olympic Hockey Team, 1964. Taken by Charles Waters, a professional photographer from the Green and Hahn Photographic Studio, Christchurch.

"For me, it is like where you come from, in some respects, at the end of the day I look at that photo and the community and it gives me pride in the community. Forty years on, we still do things together. I like that photo because I see the decsendants of all those people ... and some have passed away. I like it for that (Ashok)."

At the time of the interview, Ashok spent a long time with his mother looking at the individuals in this photograph, of which his mother, Manjula, was an excellent source of information. They listed the people that they could see and at times questioned their accuracy.

They knew who should be in the photo, and wondered about absences. Remarkably, many of the project participants were present in this photograph as children. This one shot symbolically represents the whole Gujarati Christchurch community at this time. It has become an iconic image in Ashok's home. This photograph is also iconic for the community, with most members and participants, in this research, having a copy of this image in their personal archives. It also appears in the Christchurch Indian Sports Club Golden Jubilee publication (Indian Sports Club 1987). Its location places it on the field of Phillipstown Primary School with the Christchurch Port Hills in the background. The photograph highlights the importance of hockey, and records this auspicious occasion, when the Indian Olympic Hockey team came to Christchurch in 1964. This photograph shifts from both personal to iconic, and private to public, demonstrating its multiple and complex agency.

The subject of this photograph is also significant because of Ashok's participation in the Indian Sport Club. When talking with participants' about the Gujarati community in Christchurch it became apparent that hockey and the Sports Club have played a pivotal role in the development and maintenance of this community group. The presentation of hockey sport photographs as significant images made this all the more clear. On a number of occasions while interviewing, the participants repeatedly stated, *"The Sports Club is central to the community"*. Hockey was pivotal in the creating of a sense of identity and belonging in New Zealand. The male participants, in particular, spoke about the importance of hockey and the Christchurch Sports Club. They spoke at length about the history of hockey in New Zealand, the outstanding players, and the important competitions and achievements. Historically, the women also participated as supporters at the sporting functions and

competitions, treating them as a community function. The following text is in the Christchurch Indian Sports Club Golden Jubilee publication (1987:20):

> It was the grandparents, parents, wives, brothers and sisters whom the club are indebted to without whose support the club would not have managed…many hockey and cricket games did much more than produce results, it produced bonds between the different sports associations and everlasting friendships between players and which live on after the games are over.

Currently, all generations of participants in this research project are still involved in the Christchurch Indian Sports Association. It is still a way of keeping the Gujarati youth linked as members of the Gujarati community in Christchurch, *"these sports tournaments are so important for our younger generation, so people know people and keep that connection going"* (Parvati 2010). The Indian Sports Club is also a vehicle that helped not only bind Gujarati families together, but also helped the isolated Christchurch community connect with other Indian New Zealand communities in the North Island. Kanti states, *" The Indian Sports Club helped us to know people in the North Island"*(2010). The tournaments and competitions throughout New Zealand created sporting and social networks between other Gujarati community groups.

Hockey Team photograph.

Ramesh presented the above photograph, as one amongst several hockey photographs. This photograph depicts many of the male Gujarati community members and in particular the male participants in this project. Ramesh is in the front row on the left, and Kanti is in the middle of the front row and Amrut is in the second row on the left.

Importantly, this photograph is a record of sporting achievement for the Christchurch Indian Sports Club. I found the discourse of 'achievement' underlined the general ethos of the community itself. The stories of sporting achievement are reminiscent of the stories told about the achievements of the original settlers, and their remarkable accomplishments. It also speaks to the importance of sporting status in Indian communities around New Zealand. A

book is currently being written in collaboration with the Indian Sports Association and various regional clubs, about its history and achievements. The older generation to this day are still members of the club and participate in relevant activities. Further comments on this area are beyond the scope of this research, but an investigation into the role of sport in the formation of migrant communities would make intriguing social research.

The Christchurch Indian Association functions at a local level, providing a venue for meetings, religious festivals, cultural performance, and classes. The purchasing of a community hall cemented the presence of this community in Christchurch in a physical sense. Both the Christchurch Indian Association and Indian Sports Club have helped to develop a community group over the years, both serving different functions. The following passage explains their separate functions, found in the Introduction of the Christchurch Indian Sports Club Jubilee publication:

> The Christchurch Indian Sports Club was founded in 1937 (sic). It was due to the small size of the community as a whole, in those early days, that the sports club remained an integral part of the Christchurch Indian Association and was not until 1966 that it became a separate identity (Indian Sports 1987:8).

The isolation of the Christchurch Gujarati community has influenced how this group has developed in the last 100 years. It is the isolation of Christchurch, its cold, severe weather and small size, that forced the original Indian settlers to link together and support each other (Kanti 2010). I suggest that a traditional village framework was replicated by the original settlers. This remained true when their sons eventually migrated and their sons and so on. When discussing the Christchurch Gujarati community, Kanti reminisced on the days when

he was a child: he recalled when the families would get together on Saturday nights and the men would play cards and talk about the sports results, and the women, would cook and talk together, while the children played games outside. This mirrored, in a simplified way, the village social setting. Today these families are still linked in a unique way, yet they have established their families and livelihoods seperately. However, they still rely upon each other for support, social interaction, and community development. Kanti (2010) commented on the nature of the Gujarati community today:

There are aspects that you do on your own, but there are aspects of the community that influences what you do. You have your own house and work situation; borrowing money is nolonger from a person, but from a bank. It is becoming more individual in a way, but you must still think of your community, overall, you are still Indian, whether born in India or here.

Another way in which photographs have helped to establish and maintain this community group is through the social relationships they reveal. Examples of social relationships were often seen in the participants photographs. As with the previous hockey photograph, the following photographs illustrate the cross referencing of families within each other's photographs.

Parvati, as a child with older brothers Kanti and Ray, outside the family home on Ferry Road. Ramesh is the small child walking in the background by the wall.

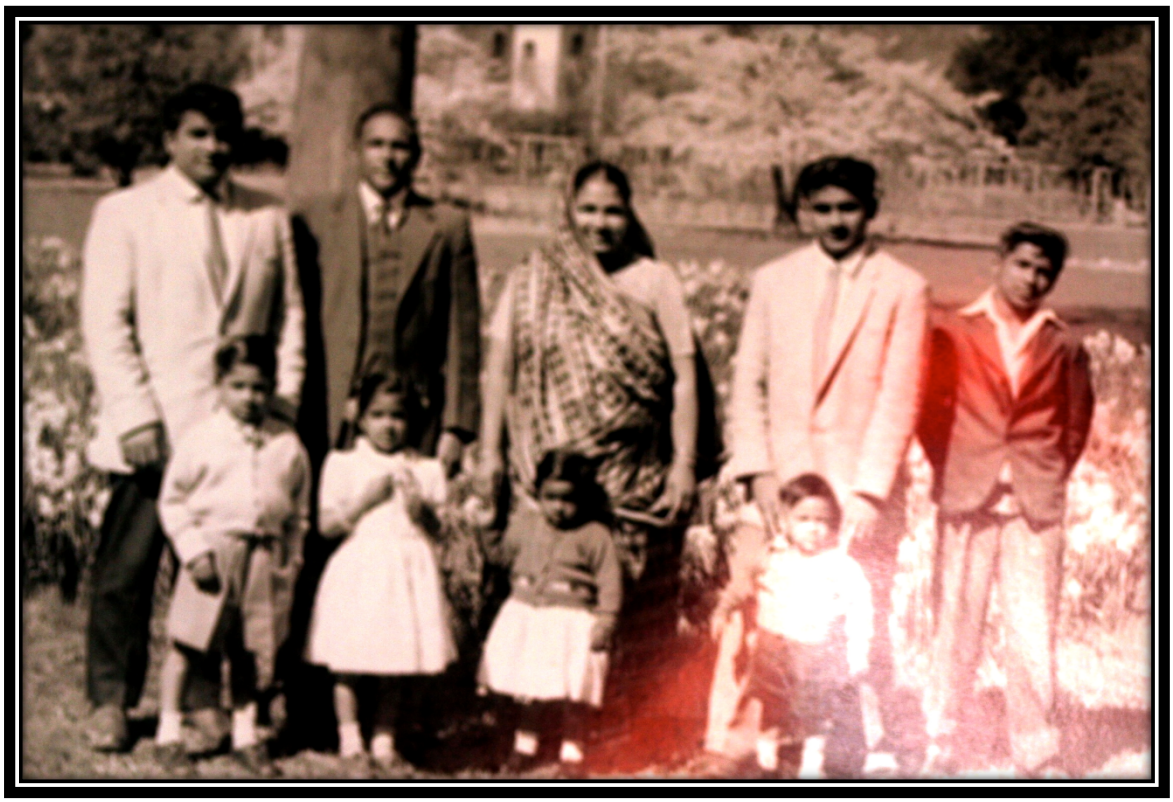
The photograph above reinforces the ideas of inter-relationships and integration. I was consistently shown photographs that had other research participants in them, thus, reinforcing the complex agency of these photographs and the tight threads that form the interdependent nature of this community. The participants would often comment on a picture, pointing out the other participants of the project (the research was conducted within a confidential framework: however, it did not take long for the participants to know the other members involved). The photograph above includes Parvati and her two brothers in the foreground, fathers and other members of the community in the background, and Ramesh as a small boy walking along the side of the wall. This helps to demonstrate the close-knit nature of this community. Often, when showing me a photograph, the participant would think that other

participants may have already shown me the same picture. These photographs reflected the nature of this community in a very direct and visual way.

Photograph of Parvati's mother with grandchildren, the Bhana girls, and Parvati's father framed on the wall.

Sara, bathing Hersha, at the Bhana family home in Phillipstown, with Sara's sons looking on.

The images above again visually reinforce and signify the close-knit nature of this group. The first photograph of Parvati's mother, grandchildren, and the Bhana girls, represents three generations and three families. All of them are participants in this project, including the picture of Parvati's father on the wall in the background. Once printed, this photograph amazed Jyoti and Ramesh, they were surprised at the unplanned inclusion of Parvati's father in the frame on the wall. The second photograph, was taken when Sara was helping look after Ramesh and Jyoti's first daughter with her two sons looking on. Jyoti talked about how the families lived close by and would often help each other out by babysitting each other's children. As previously mentioned, the families originally lived in close proximity to each other, in the Sydenham/ Waltham and Phillipstown areas. Remarkably, the majority of participants still live in close proximity to each other, but have moved away from the inner city area, with a few exceptions.



The Ganda family at the Botanical Gardens in Christchurch.

The photograph above, again exemplifies the interrelatedness of the Gujarati families in Christchurch, and the way photographs have come to symbolise this. Bharty presented this picture to me as significant, because it is a photograph of the whole family, except for the absence of one older brother. Having a photo taken at the Botanical Gardens when the daffodils are in bloom has become a conventionalized backdrop for Christchurch Gujarati families. According to those that were old enough to remember, all the families met at the same time in the Botanical Gardens to have their photographs taken by Charles Waters, a friend and professional photographer from the Green and Hahn Photographic Studio, in Christchurch. In keeping with the importance of the backdrop in Indian photography, the Botanical Gardens and its daffodils have come to symbolise, visually, Christchurch life. This

photograph, for Bharty, has a significant story attached to it, that speaks directly to its connective agency:

"Nearly every Indian family has a photo like this, and I always wondered why we never had one in the gardens like this? Well, my sister and brother went to India, and they went into the house one day and saw it in there hanging up. So they grabbed the photo, brought it back and we got copies made (Bharty 2010)."

Bharty's comment suggests that certain photos have become markers of belonging. At times, the most significant photographs were sent back to India to reside in the village family home. For Bharty, this photograph marked a form of group membership where she expected that all families should have the same iconic family portrait. The absence of this photograph felt like something was missing in the visual archives of the family.

Its absence also reinforces the interrelatedness of the village home in India with Christchurch. Jyoti also commented, *"our best photographs are not here, they were sent back to family"*. Similarily, Parvati (2010) stated, *"they could not afford to have a camera, so at times, the only photos they have back in India are the ones we have sent them."* The movement of photographs from Christchurch to India and back again, once more references how the circulation of photographs kept this group connected and anchored simultaneously. The sending of 'the best' photographs back to the family in India reinforced for those left behind that their New Zealand families were prospering and living a good life. The exchange and

movement of photographs along the spokes of the wheel to the hub and back again reinforces my claim that migrant research spans multiple sites and contexts.

There were other types of photographs presented to me that not only helped to demonstrate the interrelatedness of this group over time, but also documented adaptations and strategies that helped Gujarati migrants to integrate with the surrounding New Zealand society. Naidoo (2007), observed the strategy of acculturation in Indian migrant communities in Sydney Australia. He found that Indian families drew spiritual and material guidance from their Indian homeland, while at the same time identifying as belonging within their new country. The following photographs replicate similar findings. They also reveal the strategy of acculturation with the wider New Zealand community.

One of the most talked about methods of acculturation was the choice of clothing. In Christchurch, the first Indian settlers, my participants' forefather's, adapted quickly to New Zealand fashion. Amrut (2010) stated, *"Even though they worked in rag and bottle-collecting businesses, they were always seen in suit, hat, and tie"*. This contrasted with the clothes in India of that time, as described by Amrut, *"In India, they wore the dhoti and topi (hat), that was traditional, and it was white because it was cotton; they never wore any colours in those days"*.

Parvati's Father

The role of clothing was essential to helping establish themselves in the wider community. Parvati also commented: *"I think to assimilate into society they changed their own ways. Remarkably, the ladies never changed their clothing when they worked"*. As seen throughout the photographs, the women remained wearing the traditional sari. Some of the women participants, particularly of the older generation, still wear saris today as their everyday attire. The men would continue to wear Western clothing, *'a tie and trilby hat',* when they returned to India. When Parvati presented the above photograph, she commented, *"This was taken at the railway station before he went to India to get married. They adapted very well. It was hard but they did. The long coat, his tie, and a white shirt, everything was spot on. They were just real gentlemen!"*

Parvati with sister, mother, and Santa.

Another form of acculturation, presented through the photographs, was the exposure of children to other religions. The majority of the participants in this project, discussed how their parents encouraged them to attend Christian church services and Sunday School. Even though their parents were Hindu and still practised their daily rituals of *puja* (prayer/worship) and religious festivals, they were still open to their children experiencing Christianity. It was believed to be a useful and informative way for their children to integrate with the surrounding community. As Kanti states: *"we had to go to church, because we were told by our parents that we might learn something".* Consequently, the celebration of Christmas is not unusual in the homes of this group alongside traditional Hindu celebrations such as Diwali and Navratri.

The openness to Christianity as a way of adapting to and understanding the dominant culture of New Zealand has at times created tensions for the participants. For example, when discussing the topic of religion Jyoti mentioned that for her, as a mother, she feels at times she is *"fighting two worlds"*. Sometimes it distresses her to see that her children are more interested in celebrating Christmas than Diwali. She worries that her children partake in Indian/ Hindu festivals and rituals because, *"it is what is done, rather than because it means something"*.

There have been other tensions and transitions that the community has faced over time. As mentioned in the introduction, migrant communities and their transitioning processes are complex, and always shifting. As time has passed, the Gujarati Community has grown and shifted according to new environmental and cultural pressures. The influx of Indian migrants since 1971 has meant an increase in the numbers of Indian migrants living in Christchurch. The Christchurch Indian Association has been under pressure to adapt to these increased numbers and has struggled with its predominant Gujarati identity. More recent Indian migrants to Christchurch have come from Gujarat, as well as other regions, and via other countries. Consequently, other organisations have developed to cater for different Indian groups including the: Fiji Indian Community; Indian Social and Cultural Club; Kerala Association; Tamil Society; and Sikh Society. These multiple community groups support what Fuchs et al (2010), found in their research: that Indian identity is not a homogenous category. The Christchurch Indian Association remains predominantly Gujarati-based and directly linked with the families of the original Indian settlers. It is important to note that,

with growing numbers of Indian migrants residing in Christchurch, there are ongoing pressures and changes occurring for the Association.

The Younger Generation

The following montage is a collection of photographs presented to me by the younger generation. These photographs were presented as their most significant images. Their photographs bear witness to the changing nature of this group and depict recent issues confronting the children of this community in Christchurch. Their significant photographs also reinforce the ongoing importance of family, ancestors, community, and Gujarati identity. When interviewing the younger participants, they were very aware of the tension between the 'two worlds' and the and conflicts this creates for them and their families.

Photomontage C(a)

Raesha working as a teacher in England

Raesha presented the photograph above as one of her significant images, *"I went to England and worked in a tiny village school. It was significant because it was an important time of personal growth for me. I felt that I needed to pull away from family and focus on myself."* This was a very emotional and dramatic shift for both Raesha and her family. *"As Indian Muslim girls we are not expected to live on our own, away from family"*(Raesha 2010). Even though separated by distance, Raesha negotiated this tension by phoning her mother daily. The photograph above led to a discussion about other Indian Muslim migrant communities. Raesha comments, *"I was shocked when I went to visit my family in England. They had literally re-created India. They were completely segregated and separated from Westerners. In Christchurch, we were isolated because we were the only Gujarati Muslim family. We had*

to move outside". Consequently, Raesha has a large mix of friends, some Muslim from other cultures, some Hindu from this project's Gujarati group, and some Pakeha, from school and work. At times Raesha has felt torn between two cultures: *"My English friends supported me through difficult times, around stuff my family were not prepared to help me with".* For example, Raesha, as a single woman, needed to rely on assistance from her Pakeha friends to purchase her own home.

The following two photographs depict the transnational nature of this group and how individuals have chosen to negotiate these complex circumstances. Raesha presented the following wedding photographs. The wedding ceremony in the Indian village home, and then in the Christchurch home depicts the mutual and balanced importance of both locations. Raesha met and married her Indian husband back in the village of Adada, Gujarat, four years ago. The village ceremony followed traditional Muslim custom including the male ceremony in the local Mosque, and the couple ceremony in Raesha's family home. The following images depict the contrast between both marriage ceremonies, culturally and visually.

Post-wedding photograph outside Haroon's family home in Surat, Gujarat.

The first photograph is a post-wedding photograph taken outside Haroon's family home in Surat. It includes the bride and groom and the two mothers. They are sitting on a platform (mandap) created especially for this occasion. After the wedding ceremony the extended families and villagers would come to pay their respects to the newly married couple, and their families. At the time of the wedding in Adada, there was a celebration of the wedding, in the Ismail family home, in Christchurch. This photograph was displayed in a wedding album that documented the wedding narrative and process at home in Gujarat.

Post-wedding photograph in the Christchurch Botanical Gardens.

The second photograph was taken four months later, following the second wedding ceremony conducted after Haroon's arrival in Christchurch. After a civil marriage ceremony in Christchurch photographs were taken in the Botanical Gardens. This image relates to Western wedding photographic conventions, where the pose is more casual and intimate. Raesha and Haroon both selected this image as one of their most treasured.

These two photographs display the transnational circumstances surrounding the participants today. The photographs constantly reinforce a sense of belonging to two places at once. These wedding photographs indicate Raesha's and Haroon's sense of responsibility and attachment to both settings.

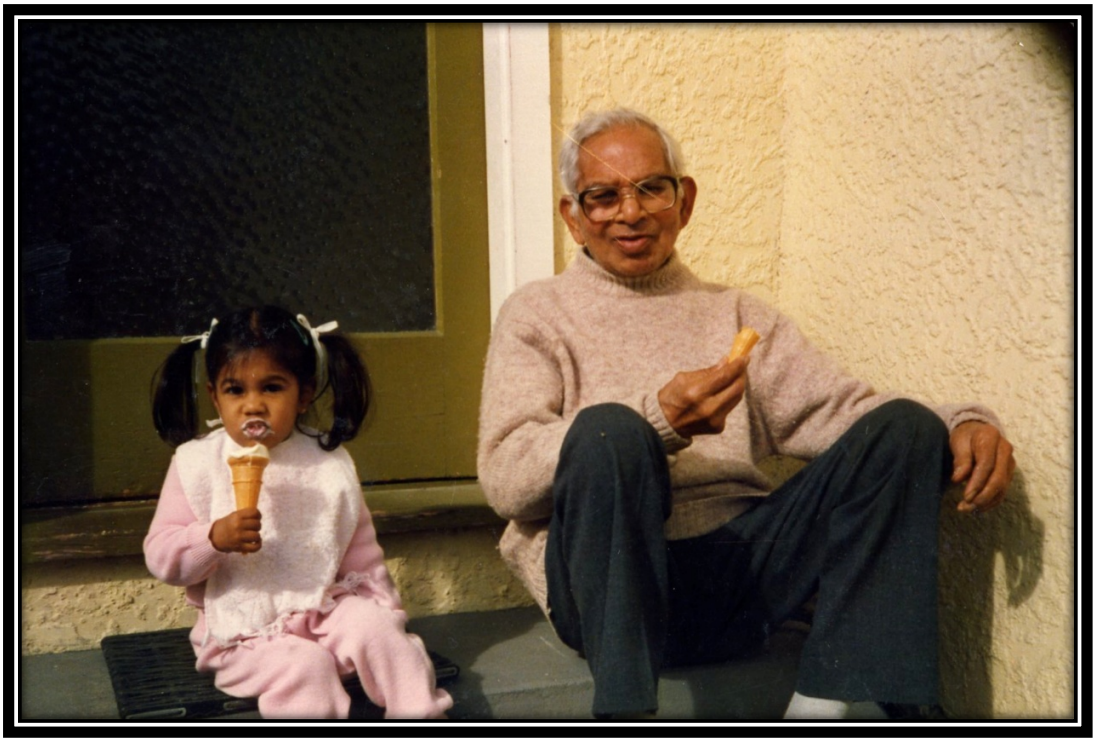
The central theme of ancestors is revisited in the photographs presented by the younger generation. The significance of ancestors, and, in particular, grandparents is highly relevant for each generation, and as I have already proposed, should not be overlooked. Regardless of generation, the discussion of grandparents and their significance was the largest theme throughout this thesis. Throughout this thesis, vernacular photographs have signified the crucial role grandparents have played, and continue to play in maintaining traditions within this community group in Christchurch.

I suggest that the role of the grandparent in Christchurch, and other Gujarati migrant communities, is vital to the maintenance of cultural attachment and identity. Most importantly, grandparents have played an essential role in keeping the Gujarati language alive. The grandparents of all the participants, regardless of generation, took it upon themselves to speak only Gujarati to their grandchildren, and by doing so, they ensured the continuation of Gujarati for the next generation. The participants in this project plan to continue this tradition. Currently, there are no Gujarati language classes in Christchurch, though participants referred to the classes previously held at the Indian Association Hall, over ten years ago. Given the demise of these classes, the role of grandparents and parents in the maintenance of language has become a concern. Kanti explains:

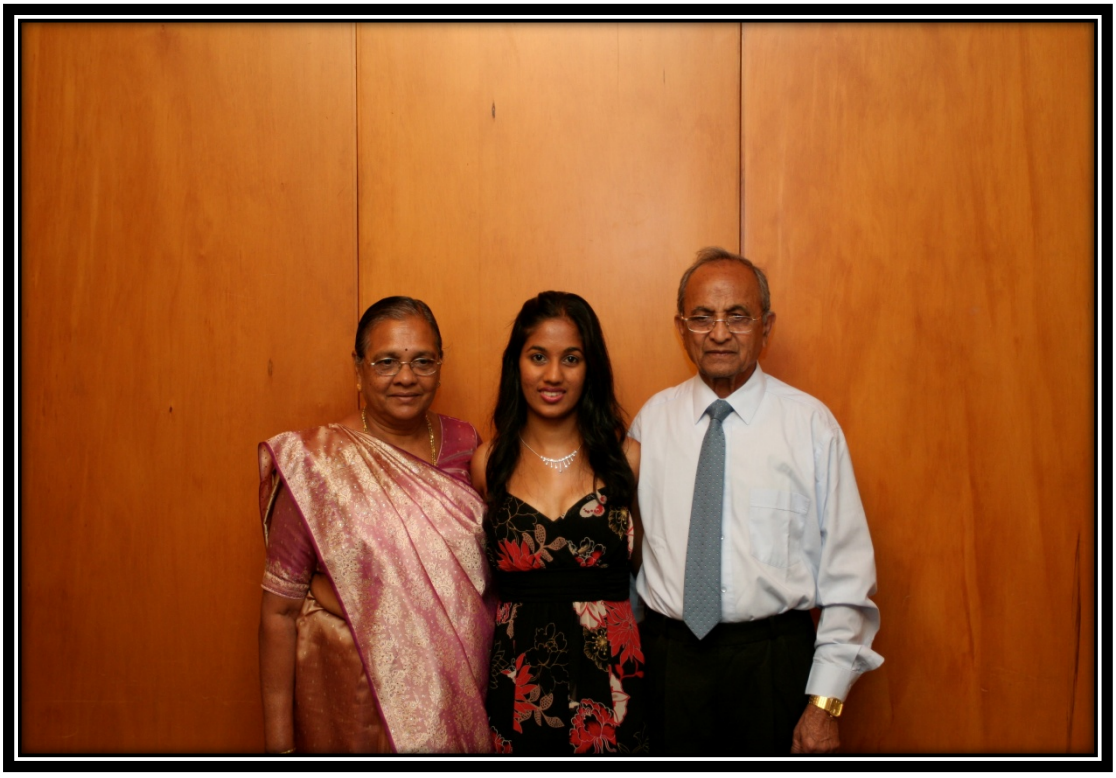
"This is where we see the difference between our generation and the generation after that... we didn't suffer as much as our parents did, in fact, they did the suffering for us ... they made sure we were ok. Because their generation came through, they spoke Gujarati, that was their

mother language. When they brought us up, they did not speak anything else. Now in our generation, because we speak English, our children speak English".

The older generation often spoke of their concerns regarding their children and negotiating between the two worlds, especially the ongoing development of the Gujarati community, cultural identity, language, and practices. From the photographs presented by the younger participants in this project, the parents concerns may be unfounded, as they presented a persistant interest and regard for their language, history, and ancestors. The Bhana Girls stated about language, *"you don't want to lose it completely, and you want to know the meaning behind it. We went to the Gujarati school. It is a shame this doesn't happen any more".* We have already seen some of the younger generation present their photographs, i.e. Raesha's grandfather, Ashok's father. The following photographs continue to attest to the significance of ancestors in the lives of all generations. Hersha and Jayna presented the following grandparent images respectively.



Hersha and paternal grandfather, *"Me and Grandad on the step"*.



Hersha and maternal grandparents.

Hersha presented the above two photographs, Hersha is the eldest daughter of Ramesh and Jyoti. She was born in Christchurch, and is a fourth generation Gujarati/New Zealander. Through Hersha's selection, it is obvious that her grandparents are still very important to her. The first photograph was also presented by Jyoti as one of her significant photographs. Hersha states: *"it is significant because I don't remember that moment; it is quite special… that was my time with my Grandad"*. The other photo is at her 21st with her maternal grandparents.

Jayna's grandfather and cousin, village Navsari.

Following the ancestral theme, Jayna presented the above photograph, *"I love this photo, it was taken 5 years ago. My grandfather was 90 years old (my father's father) and my cousin was 4 years old (my father's brother's son). What I love about it is the mix of young and old and how my grandfather is telling … mythical stories about morals and life".*

These photographs replicate similar themes of the older generation participants, where ancestors and the ongoing connection with them are paramount in their lives. The photographs continue to keep alive these important relationships in a visual way.

Photographs mirror the shifts and changes surrounding each generation. As with the following images, the importance of friends from school is also significant for the younger participants. The following photographs show a shift away from previous themes, and, as Hersha, one of the younger participants suggests, *"our significant photos may change over time".* The younger generation's photographs exhibit the shifting nature of this community, where community, for them, crosses borders from within and outside the Christchurch Gujarati group. This reflects previous parental concerns: that the significance of the Gujarati community, its traditions, and the 'Indian way' may become diffused and less relevant in the lives of their children and following generations.

Neela and friends.

Jayshree, Jaya and friends

However, the consistent choosing of ancestor photographs provides some reassurance that the younger generations are still very much attached to their origins and Indian identity. The fact that all the younger participants have recently visited the family home in India, sometimes without their parents, attests to their ongoing attachment. As this younger generation grows, marries, and has family, the future transitions of this group will become clearer. The younger participants feel an expectation to marry within their cultural group, though there have been exceptions to this, in the past. The questions that remain to be answered are: Will the next generation follow the similar patterns of marriage set by their parents? Will the grandparents of the next generation maintain the language of Gujarati through the grandchildren? Will the practice of Hinduism and its relevant festivals and celebrations persist in Christchurch? Will these families continue to visit the village and family home? At this stage, there are some strong pointers that suggest this community will continue to remain linked by its common history and experiences. There are plans to build or rebuild a new community hall at the site of the current hall on Ferry Road, and the continued involvement with the Indian Sports Club. The Indian Sports Club still plays an prominent role in the coming together of the younger members. The younger generation, although they have many non-Gujarati friends still make time to socialise and connect with those from this Gujarati group.

My analysis of these images has shown their significant social and cultural relevance. ‘On the surface’, the *studium*, these photographs maintain a visual record of membership and belonging, by enacting a visual archive of kinship sytems, and recording group events and inter family relationships. They also provide visual detail and information about the strategies of acculturation and changes to their social world over time. ‘Below the surface’, the

punctum, of these images, are the intricate and intertwined attachments that the participants feel with each other. These photographs silently reinforce, reflect, and maintain their migrant story, community network, and personal attachments. They help to reassure their custodians that they share similar origins, history, and experience. The viewing of these photographs therefore, re-affirms a sense of belonging, and strengthens their perception of Christchurch as home. In doing so, they also assist with a general sense of social and personal well-being. The photographs displayed throughout this chapter, and the depth and detail they elicited for their custodians, further justifies the realm of the vernacular photograph as a valuable medium in social science research.

Photomontage D

Chapter Five:

Digital Transitions and The Wheel Spins Faster

Throughout this thesis, photographs play a central, albeit silent, role in the social lives of participants. Their corporeality and materiality is vital to the social relationships they perform. This was demonstrated by the photographs movements and journeys from place to place; their positioning and display in the village family home; their ability to link and communicate with ancestors and in the physical interaction of holding and touching. Because digital photographs were among some of the photographs presented, it is necessary to question the changing nature of photographic forms on their social agency. Digital photographs and the changes to their tangibility caused some concern for the participants in this project. For instance, if the materiality of the image is essential to its social agency, then how will this tangibility be affected once images become predominantly digitised? With reference to the role of photographs as devotional images, in this migrant context, how will these roles be emphasised in the future? What will happen to the images left 'living' in the family home, in India? What will happen to this convention once digitisation becomes the norm? Will efforts be made to keep these images in tangible form? Will photographs of ancestors used in wedding rituals and festivities be presented and will they remain accessible to spiritual engagement with the viewer in digital format? The aim of this chapter is to consider the material transitions from printed tangible media to digitised modes in light of the participants' comments and responses while researching this topic.

Digitised photographs challenge traditional forms of exchange as found predominantly in the vernacular archives of this research group. However, I propose that the metaphor of the Chakra Wheel remains relevant as the quantity, form, and speed of exchange and transfer is larger, unfixed, and faster, respectively. Photographs can now be uploaded and downloaded from point of origin to migrant homes and back again in a matter of seconds. The need to send the best photographs back to the family in Gujarat is no longer 'a sacrifice'. Multiple copies of these treasured objects can be made instantly. The viewing and meaning of vernacular photographs is changing alongside the development of computer and phone technology. However, as digital photography replaces traditional, vernacular modes of sharing and archiving, the value of the printed photograph needs to be reconsidered. For the participants in this research project, the advent of digitisation causes some dilemmas, especially in the areas of tangibility, embodiment, and affective agency.

During my interviews the topic of digital photographs was presented by participants as a dilemma, and unwelcome change. Participants consistently drew a distinction between their personal photographs in their albums, frames, and on the wall, to those digital photographs seen on the computer or in photo frames. The participants themselves argued that personal printed photographs remain private and intimate, in contrast to digitised photographs presented on a screen. They perceived digitised photographs as public and outside the personal domain. Therefore, in this context, the materiality of the photograph is central to its social agency, where digitised images are no longer perceived as accessible sites of personal interaction and intimacy. Therefore, it can be assumed that their changed physical state will potentially change the depth of affective response experienced by the viewer, and create a

sense of alienation and distance from the digitised form. The following comments were taken from particpants transcripts (2010):

Parvati, *"I do not like digital, because you do not have them to look at, like in an album"*.

Manjula, *"I like my photographs in my hand, to be looked at like that"*. Jyoti, *" I think it is nicer to have them physically in your hands than on the screen"*.

Neela, *"For me the best photos on the computer get printed, and then I put them on my walls"*.

Kanti, *"Photographs on tv screens and computers become more public and are no longer as personal"*.

Neela, *"The photograph seems more real in your hands than on the screen. It is, kind of, old-school cool! Holding the photo seems more authentic and intimate"*.

It would appear from these comments that photographic presence is not only important in a religious and virtual sense, as discussed earlier in this thesis, but presence is also important in a tangible (material) sense. The physicality of photographs and the conventions of their display, is essential to the meaning and interaction the participants have with these images. Participants commented, that they have photographs on their computers, but rarely, if ever look at them. Some of the younger generation claimed to have many digital images stored on their computers, but still prefer to print off tangible copies of their favourites.

During this research, I witnessed how the viewing of photographs is also a physical experience. As described in the above comments, the participants engaged in a physical way with their photographs predominantly through touch. The holding of the image is taken for

granted, and yet, as described by the participants, the holding of the photograph imparts a level of intimate engagement that digitised images cannot achieve. The significance of touch is further emphasised in this context by witnessing photographic portraits that have had *talik's* (small marking on forehead) placed on them, or other objects such as flowers. This implies that the photograph embodies the person and therefore to touch the photograph is to touch the person. The materiality of the photograph amongst Gujarati families is also important in wedding rituals, where the ancestors are made present through the photograph, and are placed at the entrance to the ceremony. Throughout this thesis, the materiality of the photograph has been at the centre of it's social agency.

Although the participants in this project were unanimous in their attitude towards digital images, some digital images were significant and offered some unique opportunities. Sara presented the following digital photograph; it was one of many photographs found in a digitally printed wedding album. This photo album was particularly valuable to Sara as both a record of her son's wedding and a modern and new, treasured object. The photographs were taken by a professional photographer at Sara's son's wedding in Gujarat, India. These images and the photograph album resemble more closely what Pinney (1997) and Gutman (1992) refer to as stylised Indian photography. The pages include photo-montages, surrounded by embellished designs, colour and background images. The graphics and digital applications used are reminiscent of earlier Indian photographic conventions, where the portrayal of 'better than reality' is sought, such as the use of montage, split, and painted images. These techniques are similar to methods descibed by Pinney (2003a) that collapse both time and space.

Sara's, son's wedding, a page from the digital wedding album.

Sara's, son's wedding, a page from the digital wedding album.

The above photograph includes the Mosque and the family home, both sites for the wedding, at the same time. The background image of a modern car symbolises additional readings of wealth and status.

With the advent of digital photography and printing techniques and styles, Indian photographic conventions may transfer to Gujarati and other Indian migrant communities. In the past, as previously mentioned, photographs in migrant communities were predominantly produced in the migrant setting and sent back to India. Consequently, Western photographic styles masked the nature of these photographs. Digital production may mean that Indian photographic conventions may transfer more readily to Indian migrant communities, and begin a renewal of an 'Indian way' and style of photography outside of India. Already in Auckland, Indian photographers are incorporating Indian conventions and styles into locally-produced wedding albums (Photographer 2010). Some participants commented, that they do not like Indian stylised photographs. They found them too bright, and *'Bollywood'*. One person commented, *"they throw many images together in one photograph, and they do not make sense"*. As previously discussed in the introduction, Pinney describes the nature of Indian photography as different to Western conventions; therefore, the negotiation and adaptation of Indian stylised photography, as it circulates around the globe in digital format, will be fascinating to follow. I envisage that this Gujarati group may struggle, and resist, migrating Indian photographic styles, given their greater familiarity with Western photography.

With reference to older Indian migrant communities in New Zealand, there is an ironic turning of the tables. Instead of struggling to hold onto Indian traditions and culture as a marginalised community within New Zealand, there is an influx of modern "India" into New Zealand that is unfamiliar to the participants in this project. The modern form of the 'Indian wedding' in New Zealand is a growing industry alongside the importing of 'Bollywood films and music'. Wedding photography and on-line social network sites are playing a large part in this expansion.

Historical archives are also using digital photography to record non-digital photographs. Currently, within this Christchurch group, old historical photographs are being scanned and copied digitally to reference archives for future community publications. This acknowledges the significance of photographs for the community and ensures their archiving and display for future generations.

Neela's family photograph, while on holiday in the North Island, New Zealand.

Digital photographs are opening up new visual perspectives and adaptations. Neela presented the above digital photograph as one of her most significant. She *"loves this photograph",* because it represents the whole family while on holiday in the North Island of New Zealand. Although it is digital, this photograph remained a significant image for Neela. It is radically different to the traditional Indian family photograph, and although it was not remastered digitally, it is certainly an abstracted family image. The theme of family is still central to Neela's relationship with this photograph. Hersha also presented to me a digitally printed album of her trip back to India. It contained many images that helped to narrate her journey. The images were also embedded in graphic designs and embellishments adding interest and

aesthetic appeal to the album. The other benefit of this form of digital album was the ability to make several copies and send them to her cousins overseas.

Although the general impression of the participants in this project is to resist changes to the tangible form of photographs, the community appears to have adopted the modality of digital photographs as a useful tool in some instances. How the community and the participants negotiate the need for the photograph to be physically present in their personal interactions is yet to be seen? The current printed photographs of ancestors are likely to increase in personal significance over time as they become rarer, yet they are more likely to be copied, restored, and altered. As the many questions raised in this chapter suggest, there is the potential for further research in the area of digital transitions and negotiations in vernacular contexts.

As seen in Sara's digital album, the themes remain the same; family, village, achievement, and ancestors. However, the nature of display is changing and may mean that cultural contexts and photographic conventions will change and shift more quickly as social networks between migrant communities expand and speed up. The changes to vernacular photographs may mirror the expansion and infiltration of a 'modern' India around the globe in migrant communities.

Chapter 6:

Discussion and Conclusion

"It's your history, each photo tells a story. Family history is the most important story; it is the same for most of the other Indian families: especially, photos of their grandparents, parents and birthplace. Because we live so far away from our parents birthplace, the photos are a connection. My photos are a connection to my parents because my parents have passed on. It is a connection to their home and to their parents" (Bharty 2010).

As expressed in the statement above, the photographs presented in this thesis are treasured, privileged objects. They enact complex social relationships and are entrenched within the participants' social lives. Through the vernacular photograph, I have accumulated data and information that expresses the nature and essential aspects of their social world. I cannot claim this thesis to be a complete ethnography of this community, though it does provide an alternate presentation located in the domain of the visual. Through the photographs, I have gained a detailed and in depth insight into the participants' social lives.

The following discussion will begin by reviewing the methodology of 'auto photo-elicitation', its application, results, cautions, and participant evaluations. The discussion will then lead into a summary of the insights and essential aspects of this Gujarati/Christchurch group, as presented to me through their photographs.

Through the use of photo-elicitation and in particular, 'auto photo-elicitation', photographs have proved to be essential objects for the participants in this project. On completion of this research, and reviewing the material gathered, I agree with authors (Banks 2009; Clark-Ibanez 2004; Collier 2002; Epstein 2006; Gold 2004; Harper 2002; Hurworth 2005; Liebenberg 2009; Orobitg Canal 2004; Pink 2007b; Prosser 1998; Samuels 2004; Woodward & Smith 1999) who have examined and espoused the benefits of photo-elicitation techniques in social research. Banks (2009) claims, that one of the benefits of this technique is its ability to, "relieve the intense scrutiny of the self". By using vernacular photographs as 'third party objects', I found that it was easier to engage with the participnats and for the participants to engage with me.

The application of a high participant authority technique in conjunction with the use of vernacular photographs created a collaborative relationship between myself and the participants. The participants controlled the choice and presentation of their photographs, which helped to counteract, and challenge my preconceived assumptions. One assumption I had prior to starting my research was that photographs of weddings and cultural performance would be among those presented to me by the participants. This assumption was formed from my previous exposure to Indian images and films in public media arenas, where weddings and cultural performance were consistently presented as key visual themes. However, these themes were remarkably absent as significant photographs within this research group, with the exception of the more recent wedding photographs presented by Raesha and Sara. This absence marked a discrepancy found between public and private, visual domains, indicating

the use of auto photo-elicitation as an effective methodology for accessing the participants' private world.

Access to private worlds and experiences requires some careful consideration. The intimate and private nature of the photographs presented, and the relationships that the participants had with their images, required a sensitive, respectful, and protective approach to this process. Consequently, I decided that the original photographs would not be removed from the private homes of the participants. The photographs recorded in this thesis were copies I photographed at the time of the interview within the participants' homes. It was also important to make sure that the photographs I copied and recorded were not shown to other participants during the interview stages.

Clarke-Ibanez (2004) signalled the potential intimacy of PEI interviews and the site of the living room, as delicate. Through my experience of this research project, I agree with this comment. The settings were indeed intimate, as well as the relationships surrounding the images. These affective responses may have been restricted and less forthcoming if the interviews had not been held within the family home. At times, the emotional responses were intense and very personal. Not only was the setting an intimate and private space, the photographs were too.

Throughout this project I constantly witnessed and experienced the affective power of vernacular images. The remarkable ease to which photographs allowed access to emotive responses, was at times, surprising for both the participant and myself. The participants often

remarked on the overwhelming and unexpected emotional reactions they experienced, especially when they tried to put words to their images. As with any highly affective engagement, the researcher needs to consider their ability to sit with emotional interactions, both verbal and non-verbal. Because personal/vernacular images are highly affective, I propose that their viewing is intrinsically a form of participant observation. Gell's (1998) Art Nexus helps to explain the position of the researcher as *patient*, and within this role, the researcher is both r*ecipient* (recipient's response dictated by artist's skill, wit, magical powers, etc. recipient captivated) and *artist* (as a witness to the act of creation). Therefore, the researcher both witnesses and responds to the images they are seeing, as well as the participant and their own responses and interactions. To help deal with this complex model of object agency and the potential for my own bias or personal reaction, the focus on the photograph as the focal point formed the interpretive structure of this thesis; therefore, this thesis was, necessarily, written from the photographs themselves.

The photographs presented were directly linked to the participant's interpretation and experience of their own world. These images framed the themes and topics discussed in this thesis. Sometimes topics were discussed with no actual image, but rather an imagined or remembered image, however, most topics were elicited from a physical photograph. Sometimes, a photograph performed like a lens expanding out into an endless space of memories, sensations, and thoughts, and, at other times it contracted its focus onto a specific experience or relationship.

Vernacular photographs provided an easy and effective way for the participants' to present and discuss their social lives with me. The universality and familiarity of photographs in the participants' day to day lives made them a valuable mode of introduction and interaction. To further appreciate the benefits of this approach, it is necessary to revisit the original cautions made about this methodology. Schwartz (cited in Prosser 1998) warned about the influence of viewing patterns and social context on the viewing of photographs. This thesis has been very much concerned with learning about these viewing patterns. Using an 'auto-driven' approach allowed for specific viewing patterns to be observed. These viewing patterns were intriguing, especially the display of ancestral photographs in both Christchurch and the village home, and the use of photographs as mediators of historical and familial knowledge systems.

The tenet of auto-driven methodology is that authority remains with the participant throughout the research process. Therefore the issue of 'absence', as originally highlighted by Hurworth (2005), was apparent throughout the participant's image selection process. It is, therefore, difficult to critique the chosen absence of images when the control and authority lies with the participant themselves. As Leibenberg (2009) claims, photo-elicitation allows participants to produce a desired representation of self. In line with this approach is the notion that what participants choose to share, or not share, with the researcher, enhances the overall insights of photographs. The following example of wedding photographs will help to explain the potential dilemma of 'absence' in 'auto-driven' techniques.

The absence of wedding photographs for the older generation was difficult for me to explain. Some commented that their photographs looked too serious, or they did not think they looked

nice. The younger generation suggested it was because the older participants, their parents, did not look very happy in their photographs, often looking very serious and nervous, reflecting the new relationship with their husband, and the distress that the pending separation from their own family created, especially when the marriage often entailed migrating to New Zealand. Some suggested, that the growing prominence of wedding photography in more recent weddings, reflects a greater involvement by potential spouses in wedding choices and arrangements, resulting in a greater sense of certainty and control over the wedding process. Consequently, wedding photography has become representational of 'modern' India - as a signifier of choice and prosperity. A more thorough investigation into the history of wedding photography, and its changes over time, could make for an interesting analysis of how wedding photographs signify changing social values.

Photographs of cultural performance were also, conspicuously, absent from the participants presentation of images. During this research I attended cultural functions and festivals where I observed the taking of photographs by participants, and other members of this community: at times, I too was asked to take photographs. During these gatherings, I noted the frequent taking of photographs of dance performances, costumes, and group gatherings. However, these photographs were not presented as the most significant in this project. The focus on vernacular images implies the presentation of photographs from personal domains. There appeared to be a distinct line drawn between photographs in public and private sphere's. This approach, while allowing for the participant to choose and guide the process of presentation and image selection, stimulated the telling of personal stories and insights. I can only surmise, that a low participant authority approach, where, I took the photographs and

presented them to the participants, would have kept this thesis in the public domain, such as cultural performance, food, dance and music. I would have assumed the subject of my images would be relevant to my participants, because they were what was visually available to me. As previously claimed by the Photo-elicitation Continuum, the use of 'auto-driving' techniques provide for alternate readings of photographs that are closer to participants lived realities.

The complexity of this mode of data collection deserves a mention in the analysis of photo-elicitation methodologies. There were five modes of data: the photographs themselves; the participants' comments about the photographs; the participants' non-verbal responses to the photographs; the video taken of interviews; and finally my response and observations. As can be assumed, the cross referencing of this data was complex. However, one of the benefits of this visual methodology was the ability of the images to remind and stimulate my own thoughts, and memories of the interviews themselves.

The presentation of the research analysis is also a complex matter, because the translation of visual and non-verbal responses into text is difficult and inexact. Keeping the participants' photographs and responses at the centre of this text-based thesis was an ongoing challenge. I used photo-montage and the insertion of photographs as a technique to help combat the textual bias of thesis presentation. This helped to elevate in a visual way the position of photographs within the presentation of this thesis. I also felt that the size of photographs and quality of reproduction was also essential in keeping the visual nature of this research at the forefront of this thesis.

Another concern, that has not been addressed in current literature, is how to maintain the level of high participant authority throughout the process of data analysis, editing, and presentation. In this thesis, I have tried to keep the participants involved in the process as much as possible. With regard to editing, I reviewed with each participant the photographs and quotes relevant to their input. It was important for me to check with them that they were happy with the images chosen to be reproduced in this thesis, particularly given their high affective agency. The general themes and chapters of this thesis were also discussed, ensuring they made sense to the participants, and that I had translated their comments and responses accurately. As previously mentioned, because of the historical content of this project, the participants, unanimously, chose to keep their names and images public for the purposes of this research.

An anonymous evaluation of the research process and 'auto photo-elicitation' methodology was completed by the participants' after final interviews. This allowed for an additional avenue of participant involvement. The participants' evaluations consistently agreed that using photographs made it easier to talk and engage with the researcher. They also agreed that using their own personal photographs allowed them to feel actively involved in the research project, as well as, helping them to remember past details and experiences. Most participants were surprised by the level of emotional response they experienced, and the lack of control they had over their responses. All respondents found the experience helpful, enjoyable, and positive. For some, this experience has changed their thoughts and feelings about their photographs. For others it has further reinforced their significance. Of note, the

participants felt their photographs were respected and well looked after. In general, the participant evaluations supported and justified 'auto–driven' photo-elicitation as a positive, easy-to-engage-with, collaborative, and enjoyable approach.

Summary of Findings

The following summarises the material gathered, and themes presented by the participants in this thesis. In Chapter Two, I demonstrated the extraordinary significance of ancestral photographs due to the participants' high level of affective response and the frequent viewing of these images in their day-to-day lives. Ancestral photographs were found to have elevated social agency and performed spiritual and devotional interactions with their custodians and viewers. The high level of affective response that these photographs evoked, fits closely with Barthes'(1980) *'punctum'* and Biddle's (2006) *'wordless occasion'*. I also suggest that these photographs perform an additional form of social agency. This agency involves the participants day-to-day interactions with their photographs, and the corresponding emotional exchanges that occurred while viewing them. I have used the term 'therapeutic agency' to describe this affective exchange between the participant and their significant photographs. I justify the term 'therapeutic agency' because of the photograph's ability to assist with maintaining a sense of well-being for its viewer.

Participants felt that without photographs, the experience of personal interaction would be less concrete and direct. Their photographs provided direct access to their ancestors. Instead of standing in for past relationships that are now absent, their photographs, were found to keep present relationships in the here-and-now. At times, the photographs established

relationships with ancestors they had never met. For some participants, their photographs embodied their ancestors and were a site for reciprocal interactions, allowing them to communicate directly through the photograph. These images have become incorporated into devotional and spiritual practices, resembling the *'darshanic'* interactions between images of Hindu deities and devotees.

In Chapter Three, I explained the vital importance for members of this group to maintain connections with the 'motherland', the village, and the family home. I used the metaphor of the Chakra Wheel to help explain the corresponding circular relationships of vernacular photographs and migrant social networks. Some photographs mirrored the participants experience of multiple identities, as Indian, Gujarati and Kiwi. We saw this exhibited through photographs that marked the momentous journey of the family's visit back to the village home, in Gujarat, as well as through photographs that have themselves journeyed home. These photographs help to maintain the ongoing presence of the family within the village home, regardless of whether there are people residing in the home. We also saw this described through iconographic images of the family home, and the participants' expression of a strong sense of belonging and attachment to these particular images. From a theoretical standpoint these photographs support the concept of transnationalism as a relevant perspective for this Gujarati/ Christchurch community.

In reference to the Chakra Wheel, Chapter Four focused upon the Gujarati/ Christchurch context as one of the points on the circumference of the wheel. I found the theme of ancestors and their migrant story to be at the centre of this groups identity. Their ancestor's migrant

story and the appreciation felt for their struggles and achievements threads this community together. The photographs of ancestors and community events performed as containers, holding their treasured stories and relationships. Some of these images archived, and restated family lineages in a visual form, helping to maintain essential knowledge systems. Other photographs have become visual icons for this community group, helping to reinforce its unique identity and close ties. The constant viewing of community and historical images continues to justify and reinforce their ongoing relationships into the future.

Finally, in Chapter Five, I highlighted the importance of the materiality of photographs in this visual research context; the tangibility of the image was central to its ability to engage and interact with its custodian. I also found that changes to the materiality of the images, through digitisation, has created a dilemma for this community, especially for spiritual viewing practices involving embodied images. However, digitisation enables easier archiving methods and the faster circulation of images, potentially opening up new possibilities. I also propose that digital photography may influence the infiltration of Indian photographic styles into Indian migrant settings. This is of interest for future migrant studies where migrant photography has in the past been influenced by the dominant society.

The opportunity for further research in this area is expansive. The metaphor of the Chakra Wheel, its central axis and surrounding spokes, depicts the many connections that stem from this particular research project. It is important to acknowledge that transnationalism is also about the people who stay behind as well as those that move. Given the vital connection between the family and homeland, village, and house, a further extension of this project

would be to explore the way photographs are received, displayed, and used in the village setting. The dominant migrant history of the Navsari region and the role photographs play from this perspective, would help to complete the circular nature of this research topic. It may also shed light on the beneficial and detrimental effects migration has had on this region.

As mentioned previously, researching wedding photography in both the Indian and migrant context would also be an interesting visual anthropological study, especially given the dramatic changes in visual conventions, representations, and technology. A final suggestion for potential research is in the area of photographic therapeutic agency. Phototherapy is being increasingly used as a therapeutic tool in various settings that aim to improve people's emotional and psychological well-being. It has also been adapted to non-therapeutic settings, where marginalised groups use self photography as a form of communication and self expression. The use of this technique and an analysis of its benefits, could make for an interesting and worthwhile research project.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis claims that vernacular photographs are useful sites for anthropological research, especially when 'auto photo-elicitation' methodologies are used as a method for engagement and participation. The non-linguistic focus of this approach makes it a useful and alternative methodology. Given the significant social agency of vernacular photographs, and the easy engagement of 'auto-driven' approaches, this methodology could be of great benefit for research in other disciplines such as biographical studies, trauma, migration, displaced persons, minority groups, mental health, children, disablilties etc. The

benefits of this approach underscore the significance of personal photographs in people's lives, and signposts their status as privileged objects, therefore deserving greater attention in anthropological research. While anthropologists are involved in fieldwork, and observe vernacular photographs, they should regard these objects as important forms of inquiry and potential sites for participation and engagement.

From the analysis of this thesis, I conclude that vernacular photographs are strongly embedded within the processes of migration and settlement. Vernacular photographs mirror people's transnational experiences in a visual way; offering both new and alternative expressions of their social reality. I have shown how the study of vernacular photographs fits comfortably within migrant studies, because of their ability to transition, and adapt to different cultural contexts. Their agency is multidimensional, and in the Gujarati/Christchurch migrant context, they were seen to act in four predominant areas. Firstly, they assisted with the experience of dislocation, by performing as transitional objects, keeping people connected to their homeland and their homeland connected to those that are absent. Secondly, they reinforced and helped to maintain a form of community membership and belonging. They did this by visually documenting family linkages and shared events over time. They also acted as a visual container for their personal and community narratives. Thirdly, they embodied ancestors and assisted in keeping them present in the here-and-now, enabling the performance of spiritual and devotional practices. Finally, relating to all of the above, they performed a therapeutic role by mediating significant, affective relationships with their custodians, and, ultimately, supported an ongoing sense of well-being. Vernacular photographs are effective mediators of cross-cultural, transnational, and life experiences and

should be acknowledged as privileged, and extraordinary objects in the social lives of people. They are therefore, worthy of greater consideration and analysis in social science research.

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